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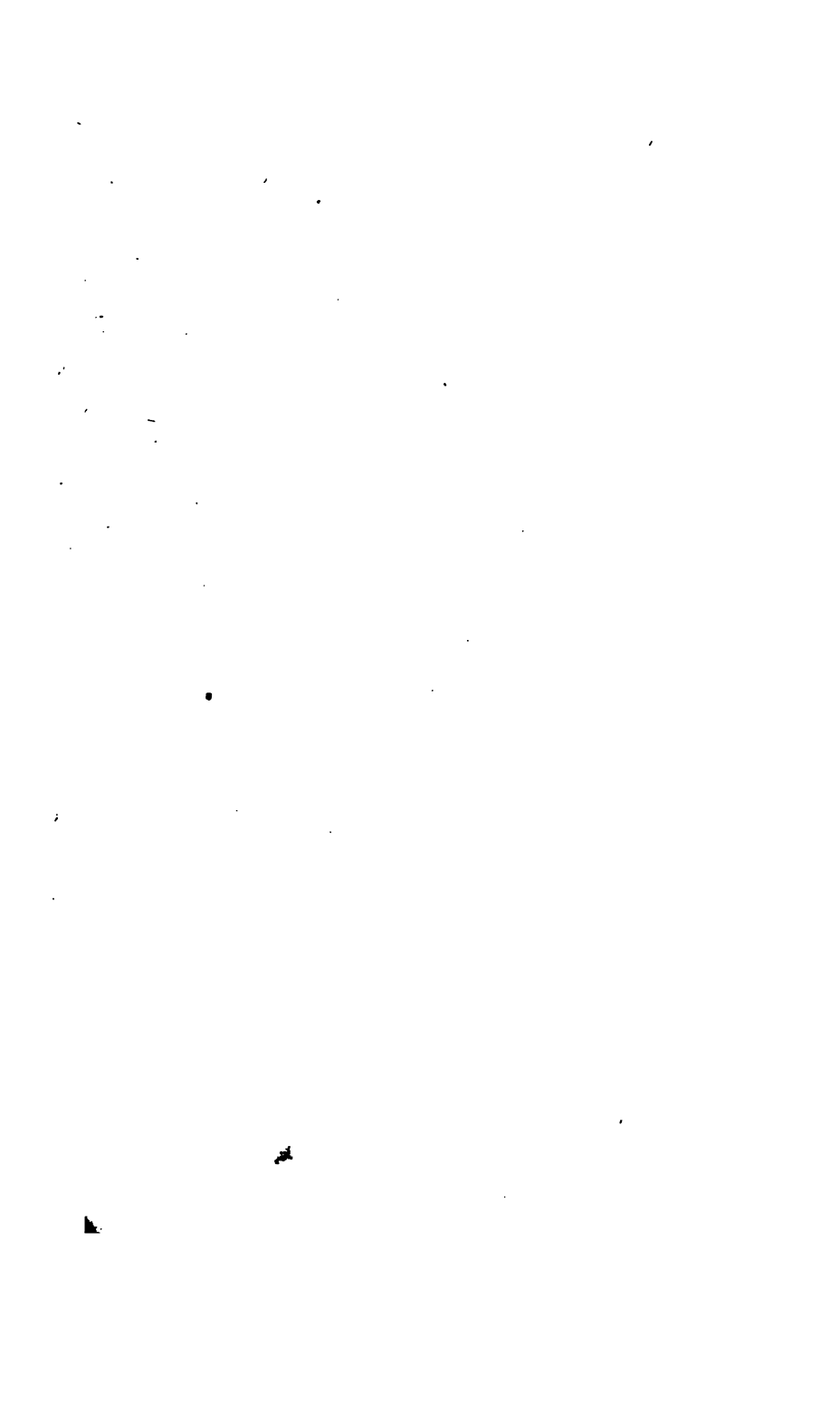
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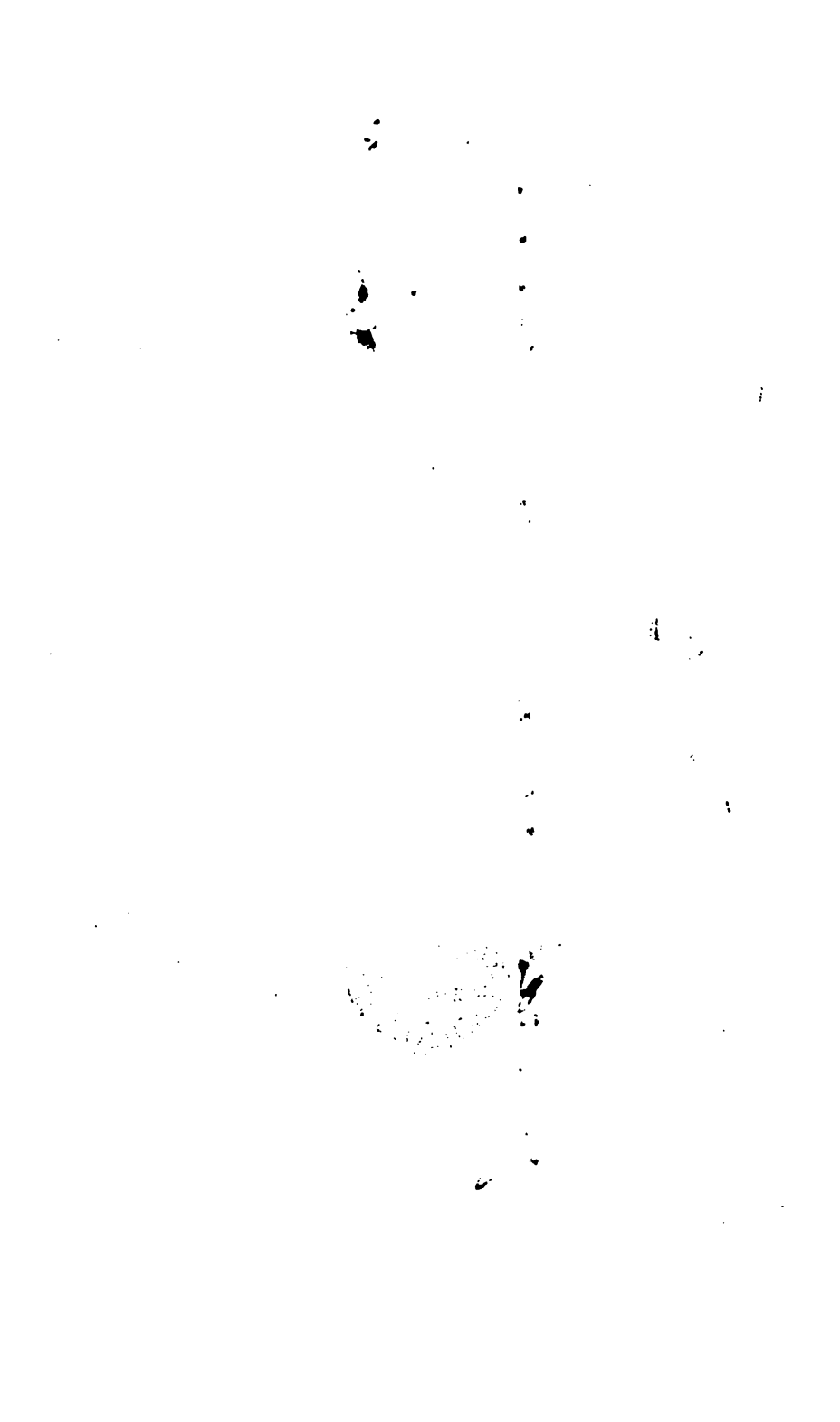
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GERARD'S MONUMENT,
AND
OTHER POEMS.



GERARD'S MONUMENT;

AND

OTHER POEMS.

BY

EMILY PFEIFFER,

AUTHOR OF "VALISNERIA"; AND "MARGARET THE MOTHERLESS".



LONDON:

TRÜBNER & CO., LUDGATE HILL.

1873.

280. j. 368.



TO

J. C. P.

GLEANINGS OF FRUIT AND FLOWER FROM A CERTAIN SPAN OF LIFE,

THESE THOUGHTS BOUND UP IN RHYME,

ARE OFFERED FIRST TO ONE

IN WHOSE EYES THEY WILL BE SEEN AS PRECIOUS,

BY THE LIGHT OF THE LOVE THAT GIVES,

AND OF THE LOVE THAT TAKES.

E. P.

MAYFIELD,

March 31st, 1873.



P R E F A C E.

THE author of Gerard's Monument has assumed the right—which, unhappily, none now living have more claim to than herself—to transplant a branch of the ancient family of Tyldesley of Tyldesley, in Lancashire, to that part of the low wild coast of Sussex which has been encroached upon by the sea. It has been thought desirable to mention this, as the story has a local setting, and persons with antiquarian tendencies might incur disappointment in seeking for records of the name amongst those belonging to the district. For the rest, the author has endeavoured to render with fidelity both the aspects of the lonely coast between Bognor and Selsea, and the traditional characteristics of a family, represented in more recent times by the gallant cavalier, Sir Thomas Tyldesley, Governor of Lichfield, who having raised regiments of "horse, foot, and dragoons," at his own expense, in support of the losing

cause of Charles the First, yielded up his life in 1650, at the battle of Wigan. In Pagham harbour, which was formed by an irruption of the sea in the early part of the fourteenth century, there is a spot known to the fishing population of the coast, as the Hushing Well. Strange and weird noises may be heard issuing as from the sea, when the tide is high ; while at low water, the air may be felt rushing through the shingle, as if to supply the void made in some large cavity beneath, by the withdrawal of the tide. It is here that the goldsmith has been supposed to be labouring in atonement of his broken vow.

Having thought it expedient to address her public in her own person thus far, the author feels it would be abrupt to stop here. If "the half of a jest lies in the ear of him who hears it," so a book, as a book, can scarcely be said to exist, before it has found a recipient Public. The author therefore commends her work to the sympathy of the reader ; whom, under all conditions of age and sex, she delights to contemplate as "gentle."

Mayfield, West Hill, Putney,

February 3rd, 1873.

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GERARD'S MONUMENT.

A Metrical Romance.

B



GERARD'S MONUMENT.



SAINT Saviour's Church lies buried deep,
It stood on the land, it fell on the shore,—
And buried the graves where the dead are asleep,—
The dead who were buried long years before ;
And over the marble, and over the turf,
The sand is washed by the moaning surf.

And down beneath both surf and sand,
Over the buried bones of men,
Are labours of many a cunning right hand
Pass'd with the labourer out of ken,—
Sculptur'd figures that seem to pray,
With up-turn'd eyes that look for the day.

And fisher-wives that dwell thereby,—

For a hamlet sits on the buried town,

(A town and a storm-beaten keep stood nigh

To the church when together they all went down),

These fisher-wives through the wild dark nights,

Will tell each other of eerie sights.

And telling each other of eerie sights,

Will pause to listen to eerie sounds ;—

A sea-bird daz'd with its short, wild flights,

Flapping the casement, or over the mounds,

And down below in the hollow caves,

The sob of the surf o'er the buried graves.

But when there comes a sound of rapping,

The fish-wives pause, and hold their breath,

Or whisper : "The goldsmith to-night is tapping

The silver image that lies beneath,

And covers the coffin that shuts in the wife

Who was nearer and dearer to him than his life."

Valery, Valery ! thou hast come,—

A name that floats on the waves of time,—
A voice when the voices around thee are dumb,—

A wandering spirit when manhood's prime,
And knightly honour, and wealth and worth
Are buried beside thee in sand and earth.

Valery, Valery ! what hast thou done,

What hast thou been that thy name should abide ?
Thou hast liv'd and lov'd in the light of the sun,—

Liv'd a little, lov'd much, and died ;—
But thou hast so suffer'd, that true hearts keep
The print of a sorrow that struck so deep.

IN Saviour's Church of a Sabbath day,
Three souls were wont to kneel and pray,—
A woman, a youth, and a maid were they ;
 God rest those souls wherever they be !
They knelt and pray'd among the crowd,
With downcast eyes, and faces bow'd ;
 It was a proper sight to see.

The woman was old, was wither'd and worn,
 And her bearing told of a low degree ;
The youth had been stricken before he was born,
 Crook'd and stunted and pale was he ;
But the maiden glow'd like a rosy morn ;
 Valery of the Vale hight she.

And near to where they knelt and pray'd,
Two figures in carven stone were laid ;
First came the dame, and then the knight,
Still and stony, rigid and white ;

Then Valery with her hands uprais'd,
Her cheeks as summer blossoms clear,
Her lips more ripe than summer fruit,
Her eyelids dropp'd in holy fear
Over the eyes too bright to suit
The solemn place ; her budding life
That shone so fair, so fresh and rife,
That some in praying there paus'd amaz'd,
And sigh'd unwittingly, " God be prais'd !"

The ancient woman said in her prayer :
" Mother Mary ! take to thy care
Two poor lambs and fold them well,—
Pasture them better than I can tell.
The keep it totters, is empty and cold,
We cling like ivy on to a wall ;
Remember the young, nor forget the old ;—
Hast room enow in thy heart for all."

The youth with the faded, restless eye,
Wringing and pressing his long, lean hands,
Said : " Powers that rule in earth or sky,
I ask not a rood of my father's lands ;

Never their goodly blood shall flow

In veins whose fountain my heart hath been,
Nor ever that heart may feel the glow

Of another's beating with nought between ;
Living unloving, and dying alone,

The blighted shoot of a perishing tree,
Save me from living and dying unknown,
To lift up a name and to make it mine own ;—
A name so bright that the mole must see,—
So high, that the scorner shall bend the knee !”

The blooming maid as she bent in prayer,
Beneath her glory of red gold hair,
Had a saintly light on her face so fair.
She pray'd as the rich and high should pray,—
Giving her prayers like alms away ;
She pray'd like a fond and favour'd child,
Whose winsome pleadings have ever beguil'd.

“ Maiden sweet with the mother's heart,

Mary ! flower of all the earth !
Can'st thou, pitiful as thou art,
Count our sorrows for nothing worth ?
Never, no ! tho' I wist not well

Wherefore my mother's son was hurl'd
Out so poor on the plenteous world ;
I do know—thou hast heard me tell,
Sitting still at his restless feet,—
That love it worketh like a spell ;
And I do love thee, Maiden sweet !”

“ Holy mother—the heart of a man—
A heart like his, so stormy and wild,—
Think of it, doom'd by a cruel ban,
To beat in the feeble breast of a child !
Mother, I would not have thee weep—
Hast wept such tears in days long past—
And so thou see'st I strive to keep
Mine own from falling hot and fast ;
But oh, belike thine heart will bleed
In thinking on my mother's son,
And, flowing out in gracious deed,
Some bounty for his need be won.
And Jesu who hast crowns and thrones
Men cannot see for lust and pride,—
Who rainedst light when men rain'd stones
On Martyr Stephen ere he died,—

O Lord, if from Thy holy place
Thou notest what we have or lack,
Pay Gerard with some inward grace,
Each outward good thou holdest back."

Uprose the suppliants one and all ;
The halting youth of stature small,
The blooming maiden straight and tall,
Went link'd together adown the aisle.
The maiden's hand was lightly press'd
On Gerard's arm, where, unconfess'd,
It guided while it seem'd to rest ;
Oh maiden heart so full of guile !
The maiden's head, no longer bow'd,
Was held on high ! some call'd her proud,—
I wist she but defied the throng
To gaze too strangely, or too long.

Oh kindly beauty, to keep the eye
From dwelling on meaner sights near by ;
When they pass'd together, that ill-match'd pair,
Men only said : " Dear God, how fair !"

Her crisp'd locks of ruddy gold
Over her stately shoulders roll'd,
And surging downward, by the way
Scatter'd a mist of gleaming spray.
Her eyes had the tinct of Spanish wine,
Bright as mirror, and deep as mine ;
Beneath her kirtle of faded silk,
Was a bosom as white as new-drawn milk ;
Of sheen as fresh as the coming rose,
Over a virgin's bower that blows ;
But a heart most womanly dwelt within.
God teach them better who count it sin !

A path adown the aisle was cleft,
Where the country folk stood right and left.
It fell on a day in the month of May,
There stood a man alone in the porch ;
He was not like to any there,
Unless to that maiden, proud and fair,—
In soothe the twain had made a pair.
He might have look'd over her golden head,
But his dark eye fed on her face instead.
Such burning looks may fairly scorch

A maiden's cheek, if so they be
Not quench'd in gentlest courtesy.

The man who stood in the porch alone,
He might have been a man of stone,
 Wrought something larger than the life ;
But waiting there in seeming rest,
One hand his cap of samite press'd,
Its fellow lay upon his breast
 Firm clench'd as if to quell its strife.
And e'en his eyes, those orbs of fire,
Now soft, but prone to sudden ire,
 Obey'd a motion not their own,
For meeting her as she drew nigh,
She drew them on, and passing by
She left them gazing on the sky,—
 Him, standing in the porch alone.

The blooming maiden past him by,
Nor turn'd on him her steadfast eye ;
The youth look'd up and his lip grew pale,—
Such god-like bearing to him was bale.
The ancient woman mutter'd low :
“ Ye wot that sun still melteth snow ! ”

So they all past on and out the door,
 Meeting the new drawn breath of spring ;
And right they saw the glistening shore,
 And left they heard the copses ring ;—
For sun and waves they shone of yore,
 And brooding birds will ever sing.

And the three past on and out of the town,
 Through the wicket gate which led to the mead,
Where Valery kilted her faded gown,
 And none were near to mark or heed,
Save the humble day's-eye in the grass,
 That open'd wide to see her pass.

The ancient woman said that night,
Combing the maiden's locks so bright,
 Whence many a spark flew out in the dark ;
"The goldsmith, saw ye him to day
As he stood in the porch, so gallant and gay "
And the maiden coldly answered " Nay."

"The goldsmith is a man of mark,"

Quoth ancient Margery,—so she hight ;—

"He has journey'd far, he has journey'd wide,

His fame is as fair as his gold is bright ;

He has climb'd the mount which upheld the ark,

He has seen the land where Jesus died,

And a cross of stars—a wondrous sight—

Shines over the spot if men say right."

Said Valery, "Kiss me, and good night."

VALERY, proud and patient maid,
Half in sun and half in shade,
Sitting still in the morning hours,
Sorting, binding, meadow flowers ;
Laying them three, and two, and one,
On a grey stone slab in the eye of the sun.
The orchard grass was high and green,
The sea a breadth of quivering sheen ;

The morning sky was deep and blue,
Where boughs and blossoms let it through ;
The apple blooms hung white and red
Over the maiden's burnish'd head.

The shells lay hot upon the sand ;
 The cattle slumber'd on the lea,
With scarce a sound upon the land,
 And scarce a murmur from the sea—
Save where a little wave more rash,
Broke on the beach with a sudden splash ;
Or titterels nesting on the mere,
Quarrel'd more loudly or more near.

Gerard stretch'd out as if asleep,
I' the grassy shade of the ruin'd keep ;
Lying flat upon his breast,
Lying still, but not at rest ;
His face uplifted in his palm,
Set and thoughtful, but not calm ;
His lean right hand in rapid flight,
Lining a page but lately white ;

His brow contracted to a frown,
His eyelids glancing up and down,
Now on the flowers that three, two, one,
Lay on their shadows in the sun,
And now upon the vellum sheet
Where all those fading posies sweet
Had seem'd to breathe their rainbow breath,
And so to conquer coming death.

The youth swept down the vellum sheet,
And started sudden to his feet.
“What boots this puny toil?” quoth he,
“This book may live, but what of me?
My father's sword I cannot wield,
I scarce can lift my father's shield,
But—” pausing then, his dull, pale eye
Grew fix'd as on some phantom nigh,
His breath came thick, his words fell fast,—
“God's life! I could have found at last
That stone which men the wide world o'er
Are seeking, but our failing store
Withheld me;—for a spindle's cost,
Wealth, fame, and power—lost, all lost!”

Then Valery, she too rose upright,
And what if tears bedaz'd her sight,—
The vaguest vision is most bright.
“Now, holy Mary!”—she was bold,
Her voice it had a ringing tone,—
“I'll gage,” quoth she, “to find the gold,
And haply you will find the stone.’

✓ She gather'd up the buds so fair
And bound them with a golden hair,
Then,—pitiful and gracious maid,—
She kissed, and set them in the shade.

He look'd her in the tearful eyes
That were so deep and wonder-wise ;
Then in the shadow of the keep
He laid him down, and fell asleep.

◆
Old Margery said, as she stood that night
Combing the maiden's locks so bright,
Whence many a spark flew out in the dark :
“The goldsmith will pass at peep of day

To join the gallants so grand and gay,
Who meet to shoot at the Popinjay."
The maiden's eyes in the dusk shone clear,—
Some eyes would almost seem to hear ;—
" And where will they go the morrow ?" said she,—
" To Bracklesham Chase," quoth Margery ;
And laugh'd to herself the while, as tho'
She wist the sun was at work on the snow.

THE keep was tottering to its fall,
But ivy clamp'd the broken wall,—
Granite with amber lichen crusted,—
A tower of steel the damp had rusted.
And they who had dwelt in the ancient place
Had long been held for an unthrift race ;
 They lov'd the weak, nor fear'd the strong ;
 The strong they help'd when in the right,
The weak they lov'd in any case ;
 And, ready to aid them with their might,
Were eager to shield them with their grace ;
 And so they came to live in song,
And die from out their ancient place.

Three tall brothers lay in the crypt,
They had gone to fight in a far-off land ;
Their bodies from over the sea were shipp'd,
While the tearless parents stood on the strand.
They clasp'd each other by the hand,
And kiss'd each son upon the cheek ;
I wis they hardly look'd more grand
As they follow'd them home within the week,
Borne at the head of a mourning train,
And never to come that way again.

THE vane which pointed Saviour's spire
Was hardly tipp'd with sudden fire,
When Valery from out the deep
Sweet silence of a maiden's sleep
Broke, as the morning from the mist
Was breaking even now, and wist
Not well—half-dreaming as she lay,
While yet no nestling was astir—
If she had waken'd up the day,
Or if the day had waken'd her.

Belike she waken'd to a thought
That lay in ambush through the night,
But with the lifted vane had caught
The first faint glimmer of the light.
For springing up as one in haste,
No earliest span of time to waste,
She stepp'd from out her morning bath
And left upon the floor a path,
Such as had made her goings known
Wherever barefoot she had flown.
Two slender heels were printed there,
Ten little toes in order fair ;
The arch between them had not press'd
The ground, but might be fondly guess'd.
Her beauty then in russet gown
She sheathed, and kneeling humbly down,
Pray'd that the Christ, whose crown of thorn
Was plac'd upon his head in scorn,—
Who lowly liv'd and patient died,
With outcast men on either side,—
Would smooth her brother's path of pride.

And then a sweet, grave face she bent
Over a coffer, and undid

The lock, and softly rais'd the lid ;
And diving to its depths she sent
A pliant hand that deftly caught
Its prize, and to the surface brought
A jewel of a rare device,
Of craft most subtle, quaint, and nice.
A thing to clasp the throat and swathe
 With broken gleams of light the breast,
With rain of quivering fringe to bathe
 In shower of summer gold, the vest
Down to the zone. It might have been
The gorget of a fairy queen.

Alack, it was the only wealth,—
Barring her soul and body's health
And beauty,—of a noble maid
In homespun russet gown array'd.
Her only wealth, and eke her dower,
All that a mother's love had power
 To snatch and save from out the wave
That wash'd so bare the lonely tower.

And then,—her fortune in her hand,—
The maiden stood, and swept the land

Low-lying in the morning sun,
With eager glance in search of one
She held would now be on his way
To carry off the Popinjay.

And riding slowly from the town,
To tighten rein upon the down,
She spied the goldsmith, and stood still
To see him swiftly lift the hill.
And still, when on the topmost rise,
The firwood closed him from her eyes,
She watch'd the wood a little space,—
A smiling doubt upon her face.
Ah ! little deem'd she, smiling there—
That maiden with the golden hair—
Of summer sunshine that could smite
A burnished head with living light ;
And gather glances from afar,
As surely as a guiding star !

The goldsmith pausing on the height,
Beheld his day-star burning bright,—
A little mote that drew the whole
Sweet picture perfect from his soul.

So gazing till the maiden went
Upon her unknown purpose bent,
He waited till his star glanc'd out
In darkness ;—when he turned about.
Quoth he, “ I'd liefer die unshriven
Than have so pure an image driven
Out from my thoughts by churlish play.”
So home again he wore his way ;—
Heard Saviour's bells for matins chime,
And breath'd the fragrance of the thyme.
“ Good luck,” cried he, “ to the Popinjay,—
It may shoot itself for me to-day !”

The goldsmith slowly pac'd the down,
The maiden hurried through the town ;
And over the morning dew she flew,
To spurn the street with dainty feet.
When to the goldsmith's she came near,
Her heart so beat for haste and fear,
That lacking breath, she made a stand
Still with her fortune in her hand ;
And pausing, look'd within before
She enter'd at the open door.

The overhanging gables made
A pregnant mystery of shade,
And over the goldsmith's order'd wealth
The daylight crept as if by stealth,—
Save where it broke upon the lid
Of cup, or chafing-dish, or slid
About a vase, or struck a blade
With light'ning ; or, where many-ray'd
And quivering on a golden urn,
A mimic sun would seem to burn.

When Valery of the Vale stood there,
Unhooded by her rebel hair,
That sunbeam left the urn, to smite
Her golden head with dancing light.

The prentice lad, he was not one
To blink because he saw the sun,
A flippant answer he had given
Untroubled to the queen of heaven.
And lending half an eye and ear
The while she made her wishes clear,
He finished toying with his nails
To throw her necklet in the scales.

“Three ounces, seven grains,” quoth he,
“Of gold as pure as gold can be ;
And you shall have its worth and weight
In ducats, and I will not bate
A denyer for its cranks and curls,
Its form so fashionless, with whirls
Like empty sea-shells.” “Let it be
A bargain, and have done,” quoth she.

And speaking thus, adown the street
They heard the clank of horse's feet,
That halted as the gold was flung
Into the scale, and as it rung
Smiting the counter, on the floor
There stole a shadow from the door,
Which darken'd her from feet to breast,
But spar'd the glory of the rest.
And shrinkingly as Valery turned,
She saw the goldsmith's eyes that burn'd
Right on her through the dim half-light
In which he stood eclipsed ; all bright
And glowing where he bore the brunt
Of summer sunshine, but in front

A darken'd image, grandly tall,
And nobly beautiful withal.

He doff'd his cap and enter'd in,
To wear it he had deem'd a sin ;
He thought—"This rare old shop of mine,
Gra'mercy, it has grown a shrine."
He said : "Bright lady, speak your will,
That knowing it, I may fulfil."

Then straight she told him how she had
Her necklet to the prentice lad
Sold for its weight in coin'd gold.
Whereon he rais'd it fold on fold ;
Its supple chains together caught
By quaintest fancies, deftly wrought,
He eyed an instant, and then glanc'd
Up at the lady, and stood tranc'd
One giddy moment in his place,—
So wrought on him that gracious face.

He press'd the vision from his eyes,
And to the prentice lad quoth he :

“ You serve my customers this wise
When I am not at hand to see ?
Have you no cunning to discern
How dullards such as you might learn
Lessons from *this* that scarce could reach
The wisest through the port of speech ?
See you no worth in loving thought ?
As craftsman, do you count for nought
Such perfect craft ? Go, ‘ dust to dust ’
Is still the word ; you see the crust
Which life informs, the life you miss.
Begone, sir knave ; I’ll look to this.
By ’r Lady, it is well I came
To free my dealing from such blame
As you had tarnish’d it withal.”
Again he let the necklet fall
Into the scale, and times twice ten
He weigh’d it up with gold, and then
He took it in his hands again,
And over it he clos’d the twain ;
Trembling a little as he drew
It in and out, and through and through,
His ringing voice grew strangely soft—
“ Say, lady, have you worn it oft ? ”

"Nay, never a time at all," quoth she,

"'Tis new as morning light for me."

He laid it on the counter down

And bent his dazzled eyes above :

"I thought it worth a sovereign crown,—

I find it is not worth your glove."

Oh, but her blood, a gradual flame,

Neck, cheek, and brow, in turns o'ercame ;

All but her eyes, that were so bold

In maidenhood, they could behold

With stedfast orb that noon-day light

Which beats upon the soul so bright,

That life's sweet morning in its beam

Shows pallid as a fading dream.

The goldsmith dared not lift his face,

But I wis that light filled all the place ;

It crept from 'neath his sheath'd eyes,

And wrapt her in a golden cloud,

Wherein she could but breathe in sighs,

Wherein her heart beat fast and loud.

She was a maiden of high degree,

And so lov'd gentle courtesy ;

She was a maiden of ancient race,
And so lov'd honour and knightly grace
She had a heart to defend the right,
So lov'd all signs of lordly might ;
She was a maiden young and fair,
And saw all courtesy stand there,
All honour, grace, and strength, well shown
Through favour that might match her own.

The goldsmith was a merchant wight,
Had fashion'd you a chain or ring ;
But his manners had not sham'd a knight,
His mien had well become a king.
Oh, moments all too passing sweet,
Moments in passing all too fleet !
She turn'd to go for maidenhood
Who still for dear delight had stood.
With lower'd lids, to hide the glow
Of eyes inept, she turn'd to go.
Dark was the space about the door,
The goldsmith had been there before,
And kneeling, barr'd the passage where
She else had met the sunlit air.

This moment from the stores of time
Was his,—he caught it in its prime,
To make of it a crown which he
Might wear through all eternity.

So strong and sweet the words he spake,
When first his passion's torrent brake
The bounds where it had chaf'd for years,—
So sweet, so strong, it drew sweet tears
From Valery's eyes which, as she bent
Above his face, his cheek besprent.
He murmur'd : " Were I black as night,
Such baptism had wash'd me white."
He said : " But I do bear a name
Knows nought of shame, nor much of blame,
And hold a heart which high endeavour
Shall raise to be your throne for ever.
Of mortal presence—foul or fair—
The spot has been for ever bare,
And still for ever, if you hold
My pleading to be over bold,
'T will be a vision-haunted place,
Barren of every living grace."

He was a man, and she a maid
To love's appeal first giving ear ;
It scarce was strange that she essay'd
To speak, and fail'd for joy or fear.
One moment fail'd, for she was brave,
As brave as she was strong and true ;
Her brother's need fresh courage gave,
The old love dar'd to face the new.

She said : " I am no woman free
To entertain your courtesy,
For like a Nazarite of old
I have a vow upon me, strong
As love and death, which ere I wrong,
I'll lay me 'neath the churchyard mould.
My mother on her dying bed
Bound it upon me, heart and head,
And hand and foot, and limbs and life,
And I must keep it sooth," she said.
" In single truth, I may not wed—
It is no dowry for a wife.
And I would keep it were I free
Of all but mine own heart," wept she ;

“It is my brother, warp'd and weak,
That God, no less than she, has laid
So naked on my hands, and bade
Me cover from a world so bleak.”

The goldsmith then he rose upright,
And fill'd the doorway with his height
An army's champion so look'd he.
“I too will bind me with an oath,—
This heart, this hand shall hold ye both,
And hold him no less close than thee!
If aught through me thy brother fail,”—
The goldsmith's cheek grew ashen pale,—
“Then may the thing I hold most dear—
Thy gracious self—be turned to stone,
And leave me madden'd and alone,—
Alone and madden'd ever here.”

She raised her eyes and look'd at him,—
Her eyes were bright, his eyes were dim,
And rested on her cheek, rose-red,
As though they gaz'd upon the dead.

She call'd him softly by his name,
And still no note of answer came ;
She laid her hand upon his arm,
And yet he hardly own'd the charm ;
She bow'd her head upon his breast,
And in the act her love confess'd.
" Oh, manhood's noble might," thought she,
" O'erwrought by love, and love of me !"
Then first the darker vision fled,
As back he turn'd her golden head,
And, in a flash of silent bliss,
Their souls encounter'd in a kiss.

Rare triumph of the golden gloom,
To witness in its freshest bloom
The flower of these two lives, which first
Thus into joyous being burst.

" God grant my brother like it well,"
She said, and broke the sweet love-spell.
Then murmur'd : " Howsoe'er it be,
I'll be true wife to none but thee !"

She went, and he upon her track
Had follow'd, but she wav'd him back,
And left him in the golden gloom ;—
Oh, life and hope ! Oh, love and doom !

GERARD on the grey door-stone
Waiting, watching all alone ;
Chafing hands whose trembling hold
Ach'd to close upon the gold.
Valery, who as she flew,
Scarcely stirr'd the morning dew
Which fill'd the chalice of the rose
That her passage did oppose.

“ Give to me thy hand, good brother,
So I fill it, and the other
Shall be even-weighted ; truly,
Did I flatter thee unduly ? ”

Gerard took the gold and weigh'd it,
Then upon the step he laid it,—

Laid it in a shining heap,
Scatter'd it with scornful sweep,
Show'd it laughing to the day,
And hid it in his pouch away.

Never had she learnt to prize
Gold, until in Gerard's eyes
She beheld its worth imputed
Into light of hope transmuted.
Then her face against his knee
She laid, and softly whisper'd she :
" The gold for you,—a gem for me."

But e'en the gold as gold no more
In Gerard's thought a semblance bore ;
Sublim'd in crucible, or smelted,
In airy visions it had melted.

She took his hand so long and lean,
She lightly shook his gaberdine,
And a little louder whisper'd she :
" The gold for you,—a gem for me."

But he neither said her yea nor nay,
His thoughts had floated far away.

Then up she starts, and straight she stands,
And crowning him with two fair hands :
“ Gerard, my brother, times now three—
The gold for you,—a gem for me !
The proffer of a heart as great
As sunk and poor is our estate.”
She paus'd, then added, something loth,—
“ A heart for me,—a home for both.’

Keen eyes, keen ears were now intent,
And keenly was the answer spent :
“ It is the goldsmith, in his pride,
Would get himself a noble bride.”

“ He is a king of men,” quoth she,
“ And whatsoever her degree
Who weds with him, she ’ll count her state
The nobler that she is his mate !”

He turn'd towards her, warp'd and weak,
Pale eager eyes, pale sunken cheek :

As she had learnt what gold might be
From Gerard's eyes, so Gerard, he
Saw all of love that he might know
From her's, that were with love a-glow.

More shrunken grew his haggard cheek,—
She saw it pale, she saw it peak,
And heard him draw his labouring breath
As one at strife with coming death.
Two angels fought for him amain,
And he was sore betwixt the twain.

He clench'd his fist : " Whence came the gold ?"
She show'd him of the necklet sold.
He wept—" Your heart is gone from me."
She said—" From twain we shall be three,
And stronger so the world to face."
He moan'd—" It is a weary place."

He moan'd—" It is a weary place,
And we two are in evil case."
Then laid his hand upon her head
And blest her, tho' no word he said.

He press'd its fellow on his heart,
And felt the treasure with a start ;
Then turning, like a wayward child,
He look'd her in the face and smil'd.

“ Here lies what shall our wrongs atone :
God's life ! I all but hold the stone.”

THE sun shed gold upon the sands,
Dropp'd jewels in the sea,
The morn that saw them join their hands,
It rose so royallie.
The goldsmith train'd his eagle sight
To look upon the sun :
“ Mine eyes, ye'll have to face the light
Before the day is done !”

He brought his palfrey to the gate :
“ Ho, curve thy neck with pride
Mine own good steed, for 'tis your fate
This day to bear the bride.

Ho, songs of thrush and nightingale,
Give notice to the skies,
And greet our Valery of the Vale
When she shall bless our eyes."

The throstle and the nightingale
They piped so loud and clear,
That no one heard the peewit's wail
That echo'd from the mere.
The throstle and the nightingale
They rais'd a merry shout,
And greeted Valery of the Vale
When blushing she came out.

Upon her head the fleur-de-lis
Was plaited for a crown,
And all about her, till her knees,
Her golden hair fell down.
A silken gown was vain to seek
In presses old and bare,
So Margery comb'd, and comb'd so sleek,
Her lady's silken hair.

Then by the diamond-dancing sea
 They go, and if there stir
A breath, deep-laden it will be
 With incense from the fir.
And so to Saviour's Church they come,
 And enter at the door,
Where the groom had waited sad and dumb
 A little month before.

The sun might beat upon the shore,
 But Saviour's Church was cold ;
The spices float from copse and moor,—
 It only smelt of mold.
The sun might break upon the glass,
 But Saviour's Church was dim ;
And brokenly the sunbeams pass
 Cold knights, and ladies grim.

Where on the altar steps there dwelt
 A little pool of light,
'T was there the bride and bridegroom knelt
 Their true-love troth to plight.

There on her breast, beneath her zone,—

He saw it with a start,—

Christ's robe as king and martyr shone

In *gules* upon her heart.

When hand in hand they stood, the three,

And gaz'd from out the door,

The rain fell leaden in the sea,

And leaden on the shore.

And silent were the singing birds,

But loud the taunting cry

Of sea-mews,—and, like warning words,

The wind went howling by.

The goldsmith led the frighten'd steed,

And caught the lily crown,

While dank and dark as water-weed

Her tangled hair fell down.

So the stalwart groom, the beauteous bride,

And piteous brother,—three

Who issued forth in joy and pride,—

Return'd in dread and dree.

The wind withstood them in the street,
'Gainst forward brow and knees it beat ;
The goldsmith even felt its might,
It caught his breath, and blurr'd his sight,
Till Gerard's scarf, which did constrain
His chin as with a curbing rein,
He hardly wrested from the storm
To wrap about him soft and warm.
Quoth he, " No wind shall blow thee harm,"
And compass'd Gerard with his arm.

And Valery saw, and Valery heard,—
Beheld the deed, and mark'd the word,
And through her passions' stately calm,
There broke the gladness of a psalm
Of praise to God, and him who stood
To her God-manifest in good.
And so their struggling way they win,—
All war without, all peace within ;
And howling wind, or driving rain,
Now beat against their breasts in vain.

The wind withstood them at the door,
Where shrieking it had rush'd before ;

Held Valery backward by the hair,—
Laid Gerard helpless on the stair,—
And blinded, with a fiercer shock
The goldsmith as he sought the lock ;
Then furious turn'd and rang the bell,—
The turret bell, that like a knell
Clang'd out,—so wildly that it broke,
And all the slumbering echoes woke,
Till man and maid came, white as death,
To hail the bride with stifled breath.

“ From storm so rude, and sky so dark,
My dove, I bid thee to the ark,”
The goldsmith said, and on his breast
He laid the golden head to rest.
She smiled : “ For that your heart is large,
O love, you take a two-fold charge ;
Two waifs you save from out the wave,
Two souls to bless you on the marge.
So lordly strong, my heart's true mate,
He will not feel the double freight.”
Again she laid her head to rest,
Safe on the goldsmith's happy breast,

And—ere the act he could disown—
Drew Gerard's softly to her own.

'T was ancient Margery, none but she,
Leant on her staff and watch'd the three
With rheumy eyes that danc'd with glee.
She laugh'd : " We shall not freeze, I trow ;
The flame, ho, ho ! that thaw'd the snow,
Will keep our household fires a-glow."
But Gerard frown'd : " Darkness and cold
Wait alway on the weak and old."

Two stars that traverse one same sphere,
Never crossing, if alway near ;
Two streams through a mountain chasm led,
Flowing unmix'd in one same bed ;
Two souls that claim to be friend and brother,
Viewless as phantoms, each for the other ;
Two men who are living and working together,
Sharing the fair and the foul of the weather,

Meeting at board and joining in prayer,
Passing in passage and halting on stair,
Closely lodged in one woman's heart,—
For ever near, but for ever apart.

The goldsmith lov'd to work in the sun,
 In the open day, and he work'd with a will ;
But he lov'd to laugh when his work was done,
 Or he lov'd to breast a windy hill,
And to spread his thought from its summit hoary,
Over the world, and review its story.
The goldsmith's mind was an open book,
And the goldsmith's eye kept a keen out-look,
And he fed his fancy from day to day
While nature and he were together at play.
The crested progress of the wave,
 The dog that panting plunges in,
The set of gorget, or turn of glaive,
 The dimples that ripple an infant's chin ;
The bird that builds, the bird that broods,
And he that shakes with song the woods ;
The bee so hot in his quest of gain,
That he makes a mart of the lily's fane ;

He knew them and he knew their way
So well, that his work was as bold as play.
But, better than all, of a summer eve,
Or by winter fire, he loved to weave
His kindling thought with the thought of one
Who was dearer to him than the world and its sun,—
Than spangled night, or various day,
Than joyous work, or careless play.

In an inner chamber, still and dusk,
Haunted with shadows, heavy with musk,
Gums and spices, and mold withal,
The flames of a furnace flicker and fall,
Flicker and fade on a wan, keen face,
That comes and goes in the ghostly place.
There Gerard bends to his smelting ores,
Feeds his furnace, and silent pores
Over his problems, or questions the sages,
Whose hopes loom large through the gloom of the ages,
For hints of that secret whose fitful gleam
Had baffled many a long day-dream ;—
The secret of secrets, whereby the length
Of a mortal's days to a mortal's strength

Should be no more tim'd, and a man might see
His life's fruit ripe on his own life tree.
There he bends when the dew-beads chill
Spangle the vine on his window-sill ;
There he leans when its bronze young spray
Faints and falls in the hot noon-day ;
There he droops when the day is done,
And all is told 'twixt the vine and the sun ;—
Day or night he sees it all
Through the flames of the furnace that flicker and fall.

And many a time, as they sit at meat,
The household, head and hands complete,
 And a word or jest will join the rest
For a moment, as beads of a rosary caught
Together and bound by a thread of thought,—
The thread will snap beside his seat.
And many a time would that body spare
Drop fainting in the gloom or glare,
If eyes to see, and ears to hear,
And hands to cherish were not near.

Rarely he tarried on breezy down,
Never he clomb to the windy hill ;
Would all the glory on view from its crown,
Could song of bird, or murmur of rill,
Help a weakling like him to fame
That would lift from the dust a fallen name ?

A slight, pale thing, but hard to move,
Was Gerard buried in his groove ;
Yet one soft voice still found its way
To soothe and hearten as he lay,—
One smile lit up his gruesome day ;—
His sister reach'd him with her love.

THE Goldsmith took a lump of ore
And fil'd away some golden grains ;
Quoth he : " He 'll want it all, and more,
And he shall have it : if my store
Grow less, I 'll double it with pains.
I 'll point my fancy subtle-fine,
And hand with thought shall so combine

To permeate a grain of earth,
That they shall multiply its worth."
He gather'd in his strong right hand
The fragments, to the last gold sand,
And pointing to the mass, the whole
Whence he had taken his slight toll ;
"This for your brother, sweet my life,"
He said, and gave it to his wife.

Oh, happy goldsmith ! had the work
You made yourself been toil and irk,
A man had done it for such prize, —
Such worship of a woman's eyes.

She took it, but she never stirr'd,
Her eyes that bless'd him, still demurr'd ;
"You wrong yourself," she said aloud.
She lov'd her brother, and was proud.

"She would deny him—he so near
Her heart, for I am still more dear !"
The goldsmith thought ; and all day long
His hammer rung it out in song ;

It rung so joyous and so clear,
The neighbours'stopp'd their work to hear ;
" So near to thee, my life, so dear."
" So dear," it echoed, " and so near !"

When all the land lay dark around,
Extinguish'd at the curfew's sound,
And men would test what they had done
Within the compass of the sun,
The goldsmith thought : " That goodly blade
Suits well the hilt which I have made,
And silver takes a light more fair,
And shows the artist's cunning where
It oft lies hidden in the gold—
Which of itself is over-bold.
Those twisted mermaids,—rounded flesh
Subsiding into scale,—with mesh
Of woven *or* upon the tail,
Shine forth more precious, being pale."
The goldsmith turn'd him to his rest,
No man on all that coast so blest ;
Nor less so, for a sword-hilt plann'd
To guard and grace a hero's hand.

And Gerard at the turn of eve
His cloudy thoughts alone would weave.
“ My smelting fire has serv'd me well ;
My tests have secrets still to tell ;
Anon, if mine alembic hold,
That which a while ago was gold,
May pass from out the realm of sense ;
What subtle thing will issue thence,—
How to be question'd, prov'd, or caught,
 I know not yet ; nor, when its hold
Is loos'd from grosser elements,
 What awful form it may unfold ;
 But I do know that I am bold,
Nor lightly shaken with portents.
Come I as victor from this strife,
I grasp the matter of all life !”

The goldsmith took a lump of ore
And fil'd as he had fil'd before.
Then gather'd up his slender toll,
And straightway on a silver bowl
He fell to work—to wreath the rim
With flowers ; careless as a whim

Of infancy to eyes unskill'd,
The twisted branches play'd around
The pouting lip their blossoms crown'd ;
But one who knew, had felt beneath
The softness of that flower-wreath,
How strongly, with a purpose fill'd,
The artist thought, the man had will'd.

And eyes that watch'd him turn about
The gold, and beat his meaning out,
With child-like eagerness were wide,
And tender with a woman's pride.
And catching of the breath, or word
Most like the cooing of a bird
Unconscious of itself, would tell
The goldsmith when he had done well.
" O love, that tendril—how it clings,—
How folds its neighbour in its rings !
Ah ! limpet-flower, so frail, so fair,—
Limpet that sucks but sun and air.
Ay, so its leaflets lick the ground—
Poor cloven tongues that make no sound,
And cannot cry for loss or want ;

I marvel, will ye ever teach
The little prince your golden speech ?
 (That silver basin was a font.)
Then, when the artificer's touch
Had haply made a stroke too much :
" Love, stay thy hand, nor all impart
The secret of the rose's heart !"

When summon'd thence by call or beck,
She hung a moment on his neck,
And looked him straightly in the eyes,—
She said : " I hold you for a God
To summon creatures at your nod,—
 Call them from nothing, and they rise !"
Her passion pal'd her cheek like flame,
But sombre in her eyes there came
 A glow from out her deepest heart ;
She said no more,—and could she live
Through ages, she could nothing give
The man beside her, for he held
Her wholly, and no thought rebell'd ;—
 She kept no secret to impart.

She went out softly ;—at the door
She turn'd and saw the lump of ore,
Which smiling in her hand she took :
“ Jesu, forgive me, who have wealth
So great, with soul and body's health,
And still the poor can overlook !”

Jesu, forgive her, if she eyed
The treasure in her hand with pride ;
Her conscious meekness when she bore
The lump to add to Gerard's store,
And fain with clinging hand had quell'd
The heart that still too proudly swell'd ;
Forgive the woman who could trust
So much to any child of dust.

“ She loves him so that she would take
The mines of India for his sake,”
The goldsmith thought, and through the night,
And in his sleep, in grim despite,
His hammer rung it : “ For his sake ;”
And, did he sleep or did he wake,
Still echoed—“ For his sake, his sake !”

The goldsmith took a lump of ore,
And fil'd as he had fil'd before,—
Only he longer fil'd, and more.
And gathering up the golden sands,
He laid them in her open hands.
“The larger share I must use up
To-day, for I must shape a cup ;
Since Jesus' blood it is to hold,
The cup will need to be of gold.”
And speaking slowly on this wise,
The goldsmith fix'd her with his eyes.

She answer'd him : “My brother's store
Is full, and when he needeth more
I'll come to thee, my life. I pray
This thing will proven be to-day—
'T were best determined yea or nay.
The worst were that he still should grope
With marsh-fire light in lieu of hope.”
She paused ; her eyes with tears were dim.
He thought : “She suffers, and through him !”
And all that day in fear and doubt
His hammer slowly rang it out :

“ The heart that I would guard from loss,
Hide,—might it be,—from Christ's own cross,
Must suffer for a weakling's whim,
Must bleed, and bleed for him,—for him ! ”

AND all that day a wan keen face
Whiten'd and sharpen'd in its place ;
With eyes a-gaze as if to spring,
With still lock'd hands that fain would cling,
With chasten'd breath, and ears that heard
The falling of the lightest sherd,
Gerard bent watching,—all his soul
Turn'd guardian of an empty bowl,
Whence there exhaled a thin, white steam,—
The dying breath of Gerard's dream.

With risks and science manifold,
To this he had reduced the gold,—
And waited at this final hour
The further triumph of his power.
He waited while a breath went up
That would have dimm'd a crystal cup,

The pupils of his hollow eyes
Contracting on the wished-for prize.
A moment more, and he will beat
Brute matter from its last retreat,—
Unhouse it wholly. Will it take
Some form unknown, or will it break
The stagnant silence with a word
By man in mortal shape unheard
Till now? The spirit of the gold—
Thus driven from its latest hold—
Will it appear to him, reveal
A soul wherewith a man may deal,—
Fall down to him and make appeal?—
To him who holds, or blind, or seeing,
The secret of its homeless being?

The breath had fail'd,
The day had pal'd,
And Gerard in his white despair,
Still watch'd the place, now cold and bare,—
The ruthless spot
Where it was not.
Night slowly falls; from Gerard's soul
The mists of proud delusion roll;

It lingers mocking here and there,
It comes, he breathes it in the air,
It may his body's loss repair ;—
 But the freed captive, mute through all,
 Will come no more at human call.

Still, while thick darkness wrapt him round,
Unbroken by a sight or sound,
And Gerard, fallen in the strife,
Lay all unconscious of his life,
The spirit's unknown tongue might break
Its patient silence for his sake :
Quick'ning some inner sense to feel
A truth no tongue might yet reveal ;
A secret from the deep to bring,—
A germ to flourish in some spring
Remote from him, and yet by him
Felt as a vision hovering dim
About the pathless night the soul
Has still to traverse to its goal.
So might the dreamer, dreaming, hold
Communion with his vanish'd gold.

And Valery sought him in the night
And found him lying stark and white,
Where, through the lattice of the vine,
The moonbeams shake and hardly shine.
She was a woman strong and bold,
But night is drear, and night is cold ;
And, as she rais'd him up and drew
Him near her heart, she shiver'd too.
What battle had he lonely wag'd—
In what forbidden arts engag'd—
That she should find him stark and white,
Stricken and beaten in the fight,
Thus lying in the dead of night ?

She was a woman strong and bold,
And closer still her arms enfold
The weakly form the powers defied
Could punish for its heart of pride.
She trac'd a circle all around,
She made four crosses on the ground ;
Her hand might shake, but still she drew
The circle and the crosses true.
When on his brow she makes the sign,
The moonbeams shake no more, but shine

Pray for this soul, that in its pride
For knowledge held from man has striven,—
Has turn'd a thief more black than thou,
And snatch'd the crown from Jesus' brow."
And rising softly in the night
She blew the smouldering embers bright,
And melted wax and moulded it
As such poor cunning might befit,
Into the semblance of a man.
"Christus! Maria! be your ban
Upon this image that I make
In Gerard's likeness, and will take
To-morrow ere the world shall wake,
And set, or be it wet or fine,
With seven tall candles on thy shrine."

And so she went at peep of day
To Saviour's shrine to kneel and pray,
That He who spares the smoking flax
Would sate His fury on the wax.

The sins that bar the gates of heaven
From erring mortals, number seven.

And cruel as the grave is lust,
Baser than hell is broken trust ;
But blacker is the sin of pride
Than all the deadly seven beside.
And deadliest is the pride that dares
To filch a secret unawares,
Which God and holy mother Church
Have holden from their children's search.
And thus it was the faithful came
To cross themselves at Gerard's name ;
And tongues which once in passing near
Were ready with a ribald jeer,
Now couch'd at rest in pious fear.
And men who met him at the fall
Of eve would let him take the wall,
And women, nimbly facing round,
Leave him lone master of the ground ;
While children at their wildest play
Would drop their toys and steal away.
And on the house there fell a weight
Of silence, so that any word
Spoken to lift it, only stirr'd
The gloom it could not dissipate.

And prying glances would, when found
In covert question, seek the ground,
And corner whisperings sudden cease,
Or settle in laborious peace,
What time the master's voice, or face,
Or presence came to clear the place.

For seven long days the goldsmith broke
His wrath in lifting stroke on stroke ;
But daily thinking on his oath,
His heart wax'd gentler towards them both ;—
For love is fire as fierce as hate,
And jealousy is stern as fate ;
But a man's will at work through all
Must save him, or must break his fall.

And so for seven long days he wrought
To strike out truer shapes of thought ;
And on the seventh day at eve
He seemed his purpose to achieve ;
And on the eighth he spoke his mind,—
His words were clear, his purpose kind,—

They ended, "Brother, pray you cease
These arts which mar our household peace."

The ocean that has churn'd the storm
 May lie at ease when all is done,—
A burnish'd mirror, spreading warm,
 And smooth, beneath the changeless sun ;
But turbid waters that have caught
 A trick of trouble at their source,
And still are pressed and overwrought
 With stony griefs throughout their course,
Will fret and murmur, unallay'd
By balmy sun, or cooling shade.

So Gerard, stricken at the source
Of life, retorted sharp and hoarse ;
And rising, stood with eye more haught
Than had his brothers,—they who fought
The "Standard of the King" to shield
From heathens on a bloody field.

"The light your voice would fain suppress
Is nature's truth,—no more, no less ;—

The 'arts which mar your household peace,'
Are strivings for the soul's release ;
To ignorance and fabled fears
In durance it has lain long years."
Quoth he : " You bondsmen fain would bind
Your own gross fetters on the wind ;
You herd with churls who fear the light,
With jealous guardians of the night,
And side with knaves who skulk and pry ;
You live on other planes than I ;—
Your thoughts are broad,—they are not high,—
I think I hold them not too cheap
If I should say they are not deep."

The hero-blood so proudly flow'd
In Gerard's veins, its poor abode
Seem'd lifted from its own disgrace
To meet the goldsmith face to face,
And make the man of might forget
That such unequal forces met.
He too held blood of fighting men
Within, to surge up hotly when,

As now, the steel of cutting words
Drew sparks more keen than angry swords.

And so he thrust again : "The truth
You seek is centred in a youth,—
Gerard de Tyldesley, by your leave ;—
Vain-glorious, and of stomach high,
He lacks the seer's—the single eye—
Which can discover or achieve.
He would refine a mine of gold
Only his image to behold
Clear at its heart ; when that was done,
He 'd count the battle nobly won
With nature, and proclaim a truce ;
But, lest the gold should fall to use
Less worthy, he by some weird art
Which men call black, must rend apart
Its elements, till that which stood
Among us as the type of good,—
Which might have taken shape as fair
As dream of Solomon,—wax'd rare
And rarer till it laps'd in air."

And speaking thus, each from his place
Could hear a voice, could see a face,
But lost the features of the soul
Which had inform'd with life the whole.

Nor did the goldsmith dream how pale
Wax'd Gerard, or how near to fail,
The while his voice was ringing still,
O'ermaster'd by his valiant will.

"I said your thoughts were broad, I find
Them straiten'd as might fit a hind ;
I see that if they had been deep,
You lack the courage for a leap
Sheer to the unknown heart of things ;—
Your spirit it hath hands,—not wings,—
So cannot soar, but climbs and clings.
You have no faith to tempt the hell
Of failure, and return to tell
That still in failure—all is well."
He hardly spoke the words, but sigh'd
Them from his lips ; was it mere pride

That sped them, or some inner light
Of vision flash'd upon his sight ?

Oh, goldsmith ! did no accent here
Strike as a warning on thine ear ?
Those boyish words, all flame and fire,
Did ye not hear them sink, expire
On lips that quiver'd with a throe
Half mortal weakness, and half woe ?

No, no ! the voice through all the years
That beats the time like falling tears,—
The sad refrain that sounds again
For each new ear, and sounds in vain,—
Words sure as death's unyielding gate, —
“Too late” — we answer still—“Too late.”

And if upon a soil unkind
Ye drop some words, ye sow the wind—
To reap, full-bearded on your path,
The whirlwind of concentrated wrath.

And windy words enough had blown
Between them ere he stood alone,—
The goldsmith,—master of the field ;
Nay, rather knight who had been thrown,
And worsted,—had been forc'd to yield
That which in honour he had kept.
Heroes in such a strait have wept.

Gerard was gone. Proud to the last,
He gather'd up each misty dream,
Each dreamy hope in faith supreme,
To nurture and to see them cast
New wreaths of glory, where the past
Had moulder'd from the lonely tower
Which once had been a place of power.
Quoth he : " Such blazon was not meant
To grace your portal." So he went.

The man who left the goldsmith's side,
Was quick with ire, and stiff with pride.
The form that snatch'd a moment's rest,
Held to a wildly beating breast,

Was feeble as an infant's hurl'd
In painful struggle on the world.
The shape that from the goldsmith's went,
For good and aye, was shrunk and bent.
God give that they who would beguile
Life's weary uplands with a smile,
 May never meet upon its way
A look like that which Valery sent
 On Gerard's lonely path that day !

A GOLDEN missal-cover lay
 Nigh finish'd 'neath the goldsmith's hand ;
His thoughts I wis were far away ;
 His latest touch was on the brand—
The fiery sword the angel held
 Before the gates of paradise—
 Blinding with utter light the eyes
Of two lone wanderers, sin-expelled.

A touch dropp'd tender as the breast
Of brooding bird upon its nest,
Into the goldsmith's palm ; his cheek
Was fann'd by one who bent to speak.
" Man's passion is a sword as dire
As this, God's awful love, such fire."

The goldsmith put the touch aside,
And scarcely check'd a rising oath ;—
" She loves him so that she would chide
Me only for the sin of both."
And thinking thus, the goldsmith broke
With work, nor made another stroke.

A bitter, moody man was he
Who leant against the tulip tree,
Or in the twilight round and round
Still pac'd the narrow garden bound.
A darken'd spirit, vex'd and sore,
Had he who nightly at the door
Ey'd Valery, perchance to win
Some tidings as she enter'd in.

And still her answer was the same
At mention of her brother's name :
" Gerard is sick ;" at which reply
He mutter'd : " So would God were I."

THE keep was tottering to its fall,
But ivy clamp'd the failing wall ;
And on the side that fac'd the down
The ivy had a berry crown.
And where the ocean's bitter breath
Had caught it, still it clung in death,
And over cracks and weather-stains
It started out like swollen veins.
And every day at the turn of the tide,
The ancient tower had grown to be
More and more a thing of the sea.
For every day the sea would hide
Some ocean gift in the dinted side
Of the rock, whereon it grew, and take
Some earthly product for keep-sake.

And every day at the set of the sun
The earth had lost, and the ocean won
By the soft exchange, and had grown to be
More and more the prize of the sea.

And every day at early dawn,
 When Gerard look'd from his turret high,
A little more of light had gone
 From land, and sea, and sky.

And every day his tale of work
Was render'd under greater irk ;
And every eve the twilight stole
A little sooner o'er the whole ;
And every night he lay awake
And thought the day would never break,
And heard the sobbing of the waves
At work within the lonely caves
That min'd the turret, where he lay
Wishing, like Paulus, for the day.

And sometimes forth the moon would come
And gaze upon him white and dumb ;

And sometimes he would choose a star
And send his curious thought afar
To meet it at its awful source,
Or follow on its lonely course.
But oftener his kinsfolk came

From out the past, and stood around ;
He knew each one by sight and name,

He knew their voices' various sound,
And stalwart warriors, armour-clad,
Would look on him with eyes so sad,
That his, which scarce had wept for years,
Were wetted with self-pitying tears.
And sometimes when his sister came

And brought the morning in her hair,
And in her eyes the pure soft flame

Of human love, and clear'd the air
Of thick night-fancies with her breath,

And with her hands' cool pressure chas'd
The vagrant thoughts which burn to waste,
That life once more had banish'd death,—
Those tears of lonely anguish yet
On Gerard's sunken cheek were wet.

And Gerard, risen in his bed,
 Would sit and wander with his eyes
About her brows, her cheek, her head,
 And hold her hand on such a wise
As they who drown will clutch and clasp
The one thing steady to their grasp.

And loosing of his hold at length,
When he had won a little strength,
Gerard would say : " Now let us put
The time to profit ; hand and foot
We two must work to mark the place
Where I was baffled in the chase ;
Great God ! if any step were lost
Of those I conquer'd at such cost !
Through issues that were blind to me,
Some future thought may wander free,
And men will bless me when they say :
" So far he came upon the way."
And then they noted in a book,
Step upon step, the path he took,
To lose at last in empty air
All shows, however strong or fair :

Leaving for souls unborn to find
The hidden path beyond the wind.

And when the day was half-way done,
And she from household tasks had won
Some further salvage, she would come
Again, and would complete the sum
Of work, that finish'd, should release
A spirit to its final peace.

The sun was sinking, round and red,
When Valery to Gerard said :

“Beseech you, brother, now give o'er.”
And Gerard thought awhile, and took
A deeper breath ; then closed the book,
Smiling : “I've measured work and strength
And find them fairly of a length ;
The record is so nearly done,
To-night I may behold the sun.”

So Gerard Tyldesley work'd no more.

He worked no more, but for a space
Sat gazing westward from his place,

His hand upon her lifted head,
She sitting at his feet ; so fled
The moments with the flitting sun ;
But there are moments, dearly won
From time, so precious with the deep
Things of the soul, that they will keep
Fresh amid chance, and change, and strife :
Pure samples of our vanish'd life.

And such an hour was this : had they
Two linger'd earth-bound till to-day,
They could at will have felt again
That rare keen breath of bliss and pain
That held them silent, with their eyes
Drinking in light from other skies,
The while they watch'd the orb descend,
And waited for the seeming end.

The sun was dropping, red and round,
And still with rays of glory crown'd,
Into a royal purple cloud,
A fring'd mantle, or a shroud ;

And dotterels circling down to land
Upon the barren isles of sand,
With dusky backs and breasts of snow,
Seem'd in mid-air to come and go ;*
While on the bosom of the beach,
That soon they might no longer reach,
The little wavelets broke in plaint
O'ertaken by the soft constraint,
Which, howsoever they might chide,
Still drew them with the ebbing tide.

A step upon the turret stair,—
No wandering of the prison'd air,—
A wafting step which seem'd to bring
A man before you, as the wing
Will bear the bird where it would be :
It was the goldsmith,—none but he,

He paus'd a moment, for the hour
Was weighted with an unseen power.

* The whole of the coast over against the Hushing Well, is the resort of innumerable wild-fowl, which take possession of the islands of sand as they appear above the retiring tide.

He paus'd, and sobbing on the beach
They three could hear the waves beseech
The stedfast shore to hold them back,
Or else to follow on their track.

Of all the mighty warrior band
That nightly at his couch would stand,
Gerard had seen no form, no face,
More noble, or of manlier grace
Than that which rose before him then,—
From head to heel a man of men.

The faded walls, the sunken floor,

 The broken pictures in the glass,
Seem'd each to shrink and pale before

 The goldsmith as it felt him pass,
So bright upon him was the sheen

 Of youth, so rich the flush of health,
That low things grew to look more mean,

 And poor things poorer for his wealth.

He spoke : “ I come not here as one
Claiming a wife who fain would shun

His presence, but as faithful groom
To guard a lady through the gloom."

And Gerard answer'd, keen and shrill :
" Be husband, groom, or what you will ;
My need is sorest now, and she
Will stay and watch this hour with me."

Whereon his sister bent her head :
" Gerard is sick," was all she said.

" I would that I had such a hold
Upon your love ; but I am bold
To think your brother somewhat strains
The means that are so rich in gains."

" It is the sun that burns so red,
For he is ashen pale," she said.
And he was pale as pale could be ;—
But paler than the pale was she.

The goldsmith gauging of her fears,
Grew mad, and madder at her tears.

"I call to wit the God above,
You wrong him by your too-much love !
With mien so fierce, so bright of eye,
How think you that a man should die ?"

"That light," she moan'd beneath her breath,
"Is wrath, and wrath for him is death."

A man encircled in his ire
Is clos'd as in a wall of fire,—
An inner hell beyond the reach
Of woman's tears, or woman's speech.
For all he heard of spoken word,
For all he felt of touch, or tone,
For all he knew of sigh, or moan,—
The goldsmith might have stood alone.

And words of passion, long-repressed,
Now fell like blows upon a breast
So soft with pity, and dismay,
That where they smote they seemed to slay.
He charg'd them with his broken oath,
His honest purpose, wrong'd by both ;

His fury like a tempest drave
His thought before it ; as the wave
Is fronted by the straining bark,
Pale Valery in the loveless dark
Wrestled for more than life, wail'd, wept ;
Clung to his hands ; then desperate swept
Her tears away and knelt distraught ;
Adjur'd him by their love, besought
His ear in many a tender tone
Which had been tun'd for him alone.
In vain ; she beat against the wind
Which thunder'd at her, deaf and blind.
His passion in its fierce revolt
Master'd him wholly ; as a bolt
Is thrown from out a cloud, there fell
A word which broke like light from hell
On Valery's heart. That word had told
Her brother of the chain of gold
Which bound him ; that fell light had shown
To her an image overthrown,—
The god-like image of her knight,—
The man who proud in lordly might
Had held his generous hand from fight,

Because no dragon had been found
That dare dispute with him the ground.
That brave pure image, undefil'd
By baser touch, that won the child
Of proud crusaders from her dream
Of maidenhood, show'd in that gleam
A craven foe with arm unknown
To knighthood, striking at the lone
And fallen. So her God was hurl'd
From heav'n, and falling shook the world.

"Godfrey!" she wail'd the goldsmith's name,
Then hid her face in burning shame.
And then, engulfing all her soul,
The billows of that tempest roll
Right over her, till—fond, frail bark—
She founder'd in the loveless dark,
Went down and down amongst the waves,
That yawn'd as in a hundred graves
Around her, and lay buried there
Past rescue in her love's despair.

And then she rose all white and chill,
And ghastly calm, tho' trembling still,
And gathering in one glance the two
Before her, to the goldsmith threw
A gesture of the hand,—

“Farewell.”

More sad than wildest words could tell.

And then she turn'd from him and knelt
Again, and then the goldsmith felt
The deepening silence of the room,—
And lonely in the gathering gloom ;
And weary eyes, no longer bright,
Were hardly lifted to the height
Of his ; and then a voice which still
Bore witness to a tyrant will,
Pierc'd through the silence : “I must go,—
My work unfinish'd,—but I know
This graceless body, frail and bent,
Will lie beneath a monument
More rich and fair beyond compare
Than any in the chapel there ;

And I shall owe it to your hand,
Good goldsmith !" So the weird command
Died out on Gerard's dying breath,—
And then the silence was of death.

And Valery knelt, the while a soul
Took stormy passage to its goal.
And now she knelt beside the dead
And loud the " Miserere " said ;
Turning a blank white face above,
That caught no light from heaven or love.

His fiery wrath had pass'd as smoke ;
To outward sense the goldsmith woke ;
And saw the ruins of his life,—
The silent corpse,—the praying wife.

That kneeling woman,—from his stand
He could have touch'd her with his hand,
But she was gone from him, as he
One while from her ; the moaning sea
Had lain between them, and less far
Had they been sunder'd. As a star

Remov'd to coldest depths of space,
He yearn'd towards her from his place
In utter loss ; for she was fled—
Her spirit following with the dead.

He wept and call'd upon her name ;
She held on praying all the same.
He tried to win her to his heart—
Her chosen home ;—but wide apart
From him, and sever'd from his love,
She set her stony eyes above.

At last she rose up in her place,
And turn'd to meet him face to face.
The goldsmith was a man to win
A woman in the teeth of sin ;
And in his eyes were love and shame
Enough to burn out foulest blame.
But now upon this woman's sight
His beauty fell a thing to blight.
She turn'd from it in haste to spread
A face-cloth seemly on the dead.

For days and nights she sat alone,
And listen'd dumbly to the moan
Of winds and waves, beside a bier ;—
And sat and never shed a tear,
But kept the candles burning clear.

And then she follow'd, as they bore
The body all along the shore
To Saviour's Church with chaunt and prayer,
And left it in the chapel there.
And then she came and took her place
At table, and pronounced the grace,
And carv'd the meat, and never said
A word to mind them of the dead.

But pining as the days grew long,
And dwindling as she sat and spun,
And growing sadder in the sun,
And waxing whiter in the breeze,
And stiller 'neath the happy trees
That open'd to a burst of song.
And no one ever saw her weep,
Nor any ever knew her sleep.

Oh, Jesu ! she that was so bright,
How came she now to wax so white ?—
The gold upon her hair to fail,—
Her tearless eyes to grow so pale ?
And she who used to grandly sweep,
About the house to feebly creep ?

Howl through the woods, when days are dark
And cold, ye stormy winds at will !
Break the dry boughs, and lash the bark,
Your wintry angers will not kill.
The blossom's wither'd,—stor'd the fruit,—
The fallen leaves renew the root.

But when the year's quick fountain rises,
And every branch with sap is rife,
When nature trembles into crisis,
And every twig is tipp'd with life,—
'Ware winds of March ! your cruel sting
Can blast the promise of a spring.

THE goldsmith in these cerie days
Would steal behind, and stand a-gaze
Upon his waning wife, or he
Would serve her on his bended knee,
Or seek with arts of moving speech
The frozen source of tears to reach ;—
Or pray her to appoint some pain,
Some mighty strain for heart and brain,
Some penance that would hold a dim,
Faint hope that she would smile again,
Tho' haply never more for him.

She was compliant, soft, and meek,
She let his kisses press her cheek ;
But still in answer to his moan,
She said : " My heart is turn'd to stone."

And then, his arm with fever strung,
Quick through the house his hammer rung
With nervous beat that did convulse
Its silence like a throbbing pulse.
And so a silver coffin rose
To sight,—a shrine that should enclose

A wasted body, wildly rent
Asunder from a soul that went
 Unshriven to a doubtful goal.
And thus was Gerard's monument
 Uprear'd in penitence and dole.

The goldsmith was not one to count
His work too costly, or to mount
The worth of gems or precious ores
With purpose to enlarge his stores ;
But working on the monument,
He reckon'd every moment spent ;
And working on it for a year,
He priz'd each hour, and priz'd it dear.
He measur'd and he sounded it :
 " 'T is solid silver every whit,—
Of fashion and device most rare,—
And I have sought to make it fair."
But still he added work and stuff,
Nor ever felt it fair enough.
Yet when that silver coffer went
 To Saviour's Church, beyond compare,
It was the fairest monument
 Of any in the chapel there.

And there were masses daily said
In church for the unshriven dead ;
But one there was who never wept,
Who seldom spoke, nor ever slept,
Who never had been seen to pray
For soul or body since that day
When she had knelt in direst need,
Nor God nor man had seem'd to heed.

THE goldsmith woke one night alone,—
He sought his love, but she was flown.
He sought her through the house and town,
And out upon the dreary down.
The snow lay like a winding-sheet
 Upon the down ; the sea was black ;
And on the snow two naked feet
 The goldsmith knew, had left a track,—
A line that inwards from the shore
Converg'd towards St. Saviour's door.

Two slender heels were printed there,
Ten little toes in order fair ;
The arch between them had not press'd
The snow, but all was wildly guess'd.

The snow lay like a winding-sheet,
 The sea look'd like a maiden's pall ;
The goldsmith track'd those naked feet ;
 The stars look'd coldly down on all.
The wind through bones and body blew ;
The clock of Saviour's Church struck two.

It was a star and moon-lit night,
And Saviour's Church lay black and white
Betwixt the shadow and the shine ;
The shadow fell on Saviour's shrine
And Tyldesley Chapel, but the tomb
Of Gerard rose from out the gloom,—
A burnish'd pyre, whereon there lay
A saintly form that seem'd to pray.

Oh, Christ ! it was a moving sight,
That face so beautiful, and white

Of its own pallor, and the beam
That smote it with a silvery gleam !
The lids half clos'd upon the eyes,
The orbs uplifted to the skies,
As in an ecstasy of prayer,—
But on the lips a dumb despair.

The linen flutings of her gown
From breast to frozen feet swept down ;
The slender hands that join'd in prayer
Rose upward from the bosom bare.
Her perfect limbs the coffer prest,
As in an agony of rest.
There Valery lay all cold and meek,
With icy tear-drops on her cheek :
So having learnt to pray and weep,
She may attain to holy sleep.

Fair as she left the goldsmith's bed,
She lay on Gerard's tomb—stone dead.

The goldsmith sat and watch'd that white
Still loveliness throughout the night.

And when the monks came in with morn
For matins, still he gaz'd forlorn.
And when they chaunted noon-day prayer,
The silent worshipper was there.
So,—when in trembling awe they said
The solemn masses for the dead ;
And when they wail'd the vespers out,
That broke in undertones about,—
They left him there ; no heart, no hand
Had strength his purpose to withstand.

But when they came one murky night,
And hid his love away from sight,
He spoke : “ Good people, I have spent
My heart upon this monument,
And I do think that none will dare
Deny me that my work is fair.”

He watch'd that night ; and when the dawn
Crept in, he found his treasure gone.
The monument stood hard and bare,
And blank and dull as his despair ;

•

MARTHA MARY MELVILLE.*



ANENT the Scottish border stands a house,
A shady house and fair, whose moss-grown towers
Look out upon a moor, where dappled grouse
Lurk 'mid the autumn heather's dappled flowers,—
Kind nature's bowers.

Betwixt the house and moor the landscape swells
In waves of verdure ; where the grass lies green,
Earth's heart has sometime quak'd ; those bosky dells
Are channels of her tears ;—more high her mien
For what hath been.

* In the poetry, literature, and art of the middle ages, Martha and Mary are taken as representatives—the one of the practical, the other of the contemplative life.

And all within the copses and the dells,
And up the slopes, and out upon the moor,
A jubilant and ceaseless music tells
Of nature's life, which breaks out and runs o'er
At every pore.

Here laugh the shaded brooks, and here the birds
Contend as though the loudest must have right,
Till Philomel flings forth his shrill last words
Far out upon the silence of the night,
And ends the fight.

Here on the blushing clover-blossom clings
The bee, till drunk with joy you see him rise,
To wander homeward on unsteady wings,
And fill the air with murmurs, or with sighs
Drawn murmur-wise.

Here be the falls so turbulent, with rains
Of autumn swollen ; here the moor-cock crows ;
Here furtive pheasants glance across the lanes,
And—where the ruffled grasses softly close—
The covey rose.

The wind which shakes the poplars never brings
 The groan of engines ; nature here holds sway,
And peoples all her haunts with living things ;
 While in their midst—with other life than they—
 Lives May, young May.

She is at home within that house so shady,
 At home amid its bowers and turfy walks ;
At home to-day, the cherished queen and lady,
 But listening to the grey old rook who stalks
 On high and talks,

She dreams he tells of Melvilles past away,
 Of heroes, wits, and beauties of her line,
Who fought their lives out ere the rook was grey,—
 For Melville blood had been in auld lang syne
 Hot as new wine.

And listening thus, she sees herself to be
 A link or coil of that long line,—no more ;
A coil, as of a cable 'neath the sea
 Of time, which guards a message through the roar
 From shore to shore.

But young and happy May ! she barely sees
Herself at all ; not young alone in years,
Still younger in the large high-hearted ease
With which she takes her life as it appears,—
Joy, toil or tears ;

Keeping no hard count current with her fate,
Nor gazing all the colour from the weft
Of being, but to certify its state,—
Until of strength, sap, liberty bereft,
Scant life is left.

Nay, not so she. The Melvilles of the "Place"
Were made of such rare stuff that this, the last
Fresh blossom of the tree, bore not a trace
Of languor from the seven ages past—
All used so fast.

You ask me was she fair, as she was fresh,
And hearty ; nay, I know not well indeed ;
I never saw May Melville in the flesh,
But those who have are very well agreed ;
Rede you their rede.

“Bonny? I think so,—bonny as the morn,
And winsome as the lilac-flowers in May;
She’d dimple into smiles like standing corn,
Blown on by idle July winds at play
At peep of day.

“And then her step, when she had aught to bear,
Scarce rung the heather-bells, it was so light;
I doubt the lark e’en knew that she was there,
I’ll gage the nestlings never took to flight,—
So free, so light!

“I mind that when she came and spread her hand
Cool on a sick man’s brow, like fallen snow,
It might ha’ been a fairy with a wand
Had bade the ugly fever-fancies go—
Bonny? I trow,

“In sooth, that she *was* bonny! Gaffer Graem,
When for all others he had lost his sight,
Would say that he could see her when she came,—
She seem’d to bear about with her a light
By day or night.”

May had a cousin ; I had said a brother,
 So close of old had been their interchange,
But sometime parted, when they met each other
 Again, if still as fond, they seem'd more strange ;
 He at the 'Grange',

She at the 'Place' abode ; a winter's walk
 Divided them,—they sometimes met half way,—
On one or other roof, I think, a hawk
 Pois'd midway on the wing in broad noon-day,
 Had mark'd his prey.

May had a father ; he was erudite,
 Lov'd books, and garner'd fleeting Border lore ;
But never from his mildew'd folios blight
 Had reach'd his heart ; than all his musty store
 He lov'd May more.

May had a friend ; a little pale-fac'd child,
 That stress of weather in its early fate
Had driven to the harbour safe and mild
 Of Melville Place, still tarried there, to wait
 Death, or a mate.

Thrice happy May ! a father, cousin, friend,—
 What wanted she in all the wide world more ?
A mother ? Who shall say where love must end ?
 Her mother was that bright one gone before,
 Who held the door

Of heav'n ajar to catch her upward gaze,
 And left a trail of light from out the tomb,
Had guided May through all the tangled maze
 Of a child's thoughts, and from our common doom
 Still chas'd the gloom.

When May and Cissy, clasping hand in hand,
 Flew o'er the moor beneath the driving spray
Of Autumn clouds, or made a breathless stand,—
 One rosy face still met the wind at bay,—
 One shrunk away.

May gave her tresses freely to the wind
 To do his pleasure with, in sport or rage ;
To make of them a silken lattice blind,
 Or carry them behind her, as a page
 Courtly and sage.

But Cissy made a sheath of two slight hands,
And clasp'd her head when ruder breezes drave
Incontinent against its gleaming bands ;
Then press'd on May—on May so strong and brave
To stand or save.

May kilted up her flowing skirts, and set
Her foot's firm arch beyond the burn or brake ;
While Cissy on each branching thorn would fret
Her fringes, and her homeward course might take
In her own wake.

Oh, happy rambles ! when the light limbs bore
Still lighter hearts,—so full, so free, so gay !
With that long walk of life spread out before,
And ending—nowhere,—or far, far away,
Where—none could say.

And sometimes there were three of such young hearts
Thus borne across the bracken of the moor ;
'T was Walter then who calm'd the timid starts
Of Cissy ; while to gather and explore
May went before.

To him she turn'd when some importunate
 Bold bramble held her back against her will,
And on his hands she press'd her own,—her weight,—
 Her whole slight weight, within the clasp, until
 She clomb the hill.

Then they would sit together on the crown,
 Walter betwixt the twain,—so fond, so blest !
And each young heart would feel in looking down—
 That of the world around them each possess'd
 The nearest, best.

Can three so feel together, and not err
 Where erring has been madness, yea, slow death,
Yea, life more hard than death, as they aver
 Who look but on the seeming ? Love and faith
 The leal heart saith

May conquer death, but what shall conquer life ?—
 Life which is only felt in throes of pain,
Is known but as some blind and deadly strife,
 Some labour never-ceasing, tho' in vain
 The throb and strain !

“Love, love and faith,” again the leal heart saith,
 “ There is no other cure for mortal pain,
They conquer life as they have conquer’d death,
 And win from anguish spoils which shall remain
The martyr’s gain.”

WALTER, with many fashions of quaint speech,
 With many quips of dress, of tone, and bearing,
With some new modes for those old thoughts, which each
 New generation gives a separate airing,
Never out-wearing, —

With these and other fancies, quickly caught
 In youth, and work’d up in the mind like straws
Which bind our tale of wisdom, Walter brought
 From England much ripe knowledge of the laws,
Much frank applause

For skilful boating ; learnt upon the Isis

And practis'd on the Tweed, where Walter flings
A glittering fringe from off his oars, and rises
From out the stream, which trembles into rings
As cleft by wings.

For sitting, when he passes, on the bank,

You only see a man with feather'd oars,
And nothing of the skiff so low and lank,
Which glances stealthily between the shores
Border'd by moors.

And standing looking on in sweet surprise,

Would May and Cissy watch him as he flew,
And catch the smile flash'd up from Walter's eyes ;
Then take their way in silence, smiling too,—
Why, neither knew.

But Walter rowing was a goodly sight,

With floating chesnut hair, and face a-glow
From hot and eager use of youthful might,
And flux of youthful life ; and they, I trow,
Had thought him so.

There came a day of spring, —of quick, warm spring,
The violet breath'd new wine upon the air,
The happy song-birds made the copses ring,
The swollen Tweed danc'd by as if to dare
The old sunk weir.

In youth we all have known some days like this,
When Nature's tides and pulses seem to rise ;
When, if each wandering breeze had borne a kiss,
Our frequent blushes could no otherwise
Suffuse our eyes.

Well, May and Cissy trod on violets,
And took their way in laughing haste, to see
How it should fare with Walter, and the bets
They 'd wager'd on the match that was to be,
The match where he,

He and some college comrades, should rehearse
Their battles of the Isis. Hist ! what loud
Sharp voices,—what wild voices shout and curse
Up yonder ! and what is 't that moving crowd
Is over-bow'd ?

Tis Walter, white as foam, with dripping hair,
Which hangs like brown sea-tangle, dank and chill,
With not a breath to heave the breast made bare ;—
Walter, but with no voice, no pulse, no will,—
Dead and still.

Weak Cissy shut the vision out, and stopp'd
Her wounded ears ; but May—would she too fail ?
With one scar'd look, one panting sigh, May dropp'd
Slanting to earth as slants the summer hail,—
As cold, as pale.

Stricken as if by lightning, when each breath
Had seem'd so charg'd with life, that any thought
Too quick with passion, had been passing death,—
Smiting her with a heart so over-wrought,—
So tempest-fraught.

When May came back again, and bent above
The sunny bank where Walter had been laid,
I think she must have warm'd him with the love
Which trembled from her eyes as she essay'd
To give him aid.

And underneath the open, cloudless sky,
Beside the road,—by all the breezes blown,—
To many a heedful ear and curious eye,
A secret was laid bare which had been known
To God alone.

And underneath that sky too bright, too clear,—
Beside the bank with violets all a-bloom,
A murmur'd word was caught by one--too near,
Which made a glowing Paradise a tomb,
And seal'd a doom.

But what of Cissy's name on Walter's lips
Just launch'd upon a half-unconscious sigh?
What? What of breakers seen a-head of ships—
Those foam-writ lines betwixt the sea and sky—
But danger nigh?

At times the current of our fate is strong
While we are weak ; then, faltering, we advance
Guided by other hands, or float along,
Caught in the high trade winds of circumstance
Which we call chance.

Just so it far'd with May when Walter came
With open hand to pay her as he could
The price of priceless love ;—his gracious name,
His youth, his strength, himself as there he stood
Gallant and good.

Why did such meanings kindle in their eyes—
Her father's and their uncle's ?—and what made
Them speak so low ? what caus'd her to surprise
Their furtive smiles if she in some sweet shade
With Walter stay'd ?

Why did the household faces look so glad ?
Why did the outside greetings ring so deep ?
Was she alone of all the blithe world sad ?
And that because a name still made her leap
Up from her sleep.

Oh, Walter ! Walter ! could he sit alone,
Safe from the tumult of a heart which beat
Too high, and in the silence hear his own ?—
Would it then say that life became more sweet
Laid at her feet ?

She knew not yet ; but soon her strong love gave
Strength to her soul ; then said she : “Cousin Walter,
I know you true, and truth alone can save
Us now, so speak it for God’s love, and alter
No word, nor falter ;—

“If I should share your life, your home, your heart,
Would it appear at all that you had less ?—
Or would the whole seem doubled by the part
I had in it, for ever to possess—
To blight or bless ?”

And Walter, with a voice less passion-thrill’d
Than hers had been, made answer : “I should know
The wealth I own’d, but young men’s hearts are chill’d
With early wanderings, and cold streams which flow,
Cold thoughts which blow

“Too keenly down the open fields of life

Where we must strive, the while you sit and nurse
The golden dreams with which all youth is rife,
Beside the hearth; 'tis knowledge with its curse,—
No more, no worse ;

“I would to God that I could pay you back

Your heart with one more buoyant than my own ;
That cannot be,—but mine shall never lack
The loyal faith that can its wrongs alone
In part atone.”

May gather'd up his words and looks to keep,

Think, weep, and act upon when she was free.
Some glean as much and more than others reap,—
So May knew more than Walter knew,—yet she
Lov'd more than he.

And talking with her heart alone, she said :

“My love—the key which should unlock his fate—
But shows to him a chamber of the dead ;
True love when not conjoin'd with its true mate,
Is dull as hate.

“ Mine still would leave the banquet of his life
Unwarm'd and dim, altho' its quenchless flame
Consum'd me where I sate,—the phantom wife
Who made the love he could not share, a claim,
And thought no shame.”

It fell out ere the two again had speech,—
Next day, when all were met at Melville Place,—
That Walter's uncle took a hand of each,
While wishes into words flow'd out a-pace,
And May's white face

Flush'd with a sudden tempest of her blood,
Grew white again, and whiter as she held
Her own against the strong retreating flood,
And all the faint, sweet memories she compell'd
To lie there quell'd.

She was so earnest in her love and woe,
That no false shames arose to complicate
Her meaning, as she spoke it sad and low,
But still as one whose word had all the weight
Of solemn fate.

“ We two are cousins, and we never knew
A time each did not hold the other dear ;
Forgive me now—my words are over-due—
We never can on earth be brought more near
Than we stand here.”

What sound was that ?—’T was Cissy who let slip
A book she held ; she rais’d it, and again
Read on, oblivious of companionship,
And deaf to voices, by surprise and pain
Sharpen’d in vain.

Yes, all in vain they spread before the sun
The vision of two lives in concert led,—
Of two whose lands, hopes, memories should be one ;—
“ I pray you spare me,” still was all May said,
“ I will not wed.”

What car’d she, having trampled down the fond
Vain hope that had assail’d her heart so long,
For all that could be said or urg’d beyond ?
It swoon’d within her ears, and, right or wrong,
Died like a song.

But once she harken'd ; 't was when Walter's voice
 Had spoken ; then, her white and fluttering soul
Crept to her ears ;—but nothing said “ Rejoice !”
 No gust of feeling through her purpose stole,
 Swamping the whole.

His pleading was so calm, and when she turn'd
 And look'd him in the eyes, they were so true,—
Ay, true as death, —no fond impatience burn'd
 Within them as she sounded them, and drew
 His secret through.

Young hope tries hard for life, with May it died—
 Died out but now ; she press'd his offer'd hand,—
Press'd it and laid it gently at his side ;
 Then stepp'd before him pale, and calm, and grand
 As champions stand.

She wav'd him into silence, and then smote
 Her hands together : “ I will die before
I marry cousin Walter ! God take note
 Of this my vow !” They heard her, and forbore
 To urge her more.

How could it happen that a girl like May,
 So lov'd, so watch'd, and tended, could be press'd
With busy cares from dawn till close of day,
 And, sick or weary, like a soul possess'd
Still find no rest ?

How could it happen that so fond a heart
 At once laid down its burthen of young joy,
To bear in others' lives its busy part ?
 Had love to her been like a painted toy
Tears could destroy ?

Her father, in his letter'd ease content,
 Would smile to hear the light, the eager tread
With which she flutter'd past him, came and went ;
 But Cissy watch'd her, and "'T were well," she said,
 " That May were dead."

When all was smooth to sight at Melville Place,
Its master look'd from off his books one day ;
" You run your life as one who runs a race,"
He said, " and we will call you no more May
In love or play ;

" But Martha, as your first name lies in state
Down in the register ; since you, like her
Of Bethany, are cumber'd with the weight
Of ' many things,' and to your peace prefer
This noise and stir."

So she was Martha who had once been May ;
A habit grew in time from out the jest ;
We often drop our natures by the way,
And why not of our names be dispossess'd
With all the rest ?

Well, Martha Melville, many lov'd the sound,
So homely as it fell upon the ear,
And people learnt through all the country round
To speak betwixt a blessing and a tear
The name so dear.

But ere this follow'd, Martha rose one night,
And, goaded by the spirit of her mind,
Look'd out to see if that pale thread of light,
It often had been grief to her to find
So late, now shin'd.

Yes, there it was,—her father at his work
Deep in the night,—he was a Melville too,
Who never felt the stress, the strain, or irk
Of aught he did, while aught remained to do
Or struggle through.

And, goaded by the spirit, she went on
And came to where he was, and drew a chair,
And sate herself beside him. May *was* gone,—
Sure, Martha's was that brow so crown'd with care,
That wistful air.

View'd in the flicker of the lamp, she seem'd
Strange and unreal to one who knew her best
When full upon her face the day-light stream'd,
Or some late dawn rose blushing from its rest,
To find her dress'd.

She took no note at all of his surprise,
But said quite simply : " Father, have you thought
How Cissy should be dower'd ? Is it wise
To leave it ? Maybe one her hand had sought
Had it held aught."

He answer'd her : " And would you have it so—
That Cissy's hand were sought for that it held ?"
And she return'd : " How many must forego
The thing they love, for while their hearts rebell'd,
Poortith compell'd."

He said : " I see that, true ;" and she again
Broke in : " I pray you grant me one request,—
I think I never sued you yet in vain ;—
If she but take my sponsor's late bequest,
I shall have rest."

He look'd up sternly : " Spoken like a child,
Who holds too light the labour and the pain
Of those such wealth is gather'd by, and pil'd
Coin upon coin,—who risk their souls to gain
What you disdain."

She bow'd : " I know that well, and feel so sad
The labour and the soil of lives like these,
That I would have it go to make hearts glad
That now are troubled,—not to nurse the lees
Of selfish ease."

Then he again : " And if you could make good
Your venture,—if your paper or your gold
Did work the wonders that you think they could,—
What would they say—men, wiser or more cold,—
When they were told ?"

She smil'd : " I had not thought of them at all,
But only of two Melvilles,—you and me,—
Content by their award to stand or fall,—
And then of these,—what think you *their* decree
Might haply be ?"

She paus'd and look'd upon the faded faces
Which glimmer'd from the wall : " By worldly rules
Those warrior-saints, who now have found their places,
Would count for little better than blind tools,—
Madmen or fools !"

Her voice sunk lower : " Thus 't will ever be,
The base ones of the earth—the men of delf,—
Will scoff, as once they scoffed at Calvary ;
And call to those who lay down life, or pelf,
' Look—save thyself.' "

He listen'd and was silent ; then replied :
" Still—noble deed in noble cause be done !
These for their country sacrific'd or died,
And for all countries underneath the sun
That blessed One. "

She rose up rob'd in one rich, purple blush,—
The mocking garment of her humbled pride ;
You might have heard her heart, so deep the hush
And stillness of the night,—so high the tide
Which struck her side.

" Only for love," she said, " such deeds are done,—
For love of one, of many, or of all ;
I do beseech you for the love of one ;
No griefs but those on Walter's head that fall
My heart appal.

“ Walter loves Cissy, whom he cannot wed
Undower’d as she is,—what need of more ?
If I love Walter, must my love lie dead
Because I cannot as his wife outpour
The whole vast store ?”

The cry within her heart, so long suppress’d,
Found utterance then, and issued not in vain ;
Her father caught her weeping to his breast,
And in the sorrow of that tender strain,
Bore half her pain.

And Cissy should be portion’d at her will,
Walter made happy ! Would he could have died
For her—the child who never would fulfil
Her woman’s destiny, but at his side
Through life abide.

Oh, sacred moments ! Love had need be fond,
Well plac’d, and true, that would not look in vain
The blessedness of such to go beyond !
And joy had need be pure that could disdain
Such noble pain !

When many days had pass'd, and Martha lay
 Wakeful in bed, and thought of two who went
From Melville Place, and blest her by the way,—
 I think in something richer than content
That night was spent.

Yet sometimes there arose dark days, when all
 Her love and faith scarce serv'd her bitter need ;
Then she would turn her face against the wall,
 Or strike her wounded heart, and let it bleed
In some good deed.

But striving, hoping, thinking for the mass,
 And working for the few beneath her hand,
Short time in tears she could afford to pass,—
 Nor much in looking from a higher stand
At sky or land.

A working woman's wholesome life she led ;—
 Long live the flowers we gather in the rain !
She who fed others never went unfed,
 And, loving much, she never lov'd again—
As once,—in vain !

But then the passing years,—they took from her
 What they must take from all,—familiar faces,
To leave her lonely with the vacant stir
 Of life about her, and the empty places,
And silent traces

At last of only one, whose heart had been
 The anchor of her rest. Lord, who shall dare
To think what they may suffer, all unseen,
 Who sit and watch athwart an empty chair
The firelight glare?

The brave heart suffer'd, but it fail'd not yet ;
 Her heav'n wax'd full the while her earth grew bare ;
She thought of how her kindred's seats were set
 On high, and one left vacant even there—
Just one to spare !

Earth's fountains troubled, wasted, or dried up,
 She took the life that dies not for her own.
And living waters from a golden cup
 Would reach her, with glad flutterings all unknown
Since youth had flown.

No more she sought to still her grieving heart
With labour only ; she had goodlier balm ;
And having found withal the "better part,"
Her whole life breath'd in one harmonious, calm,
Concluding psalm.

When worldly mothers rack'd with care went by,
And look'd upon the "Place", in trees deep-seated,
They turn'd and clasp'd their burthens with a sigh ;—
To them a life so mournfully completed
Was life defeated.

But angels, even they who lov'd her best,
Their tender watch about the old "Place" keeping,
The while she did her work or took her rest,
Would see the golden harvest she was reaping,
And cease their weeping.

And when the fulness of her time was come,
And loving eyes no longer saw her face,
The only words they set upon her tomb
Were : "MARTHA MARY MELVILLE, of the 'Place' ;
Such—by God's grace !"



THE WATCHERS,

ETC., ETC.



THE WATCHERS.



THE moonlight fell down calm and clear, and sheeted

The summer night in silver, and the moon—

A pale resemblance of the sun—repeated

His glories to the earth, and was a boon

To her like that which gentle memory

Supplies to loving hearts that sunder'd be.

And in this hour of calm and consolation,

Of sweet regrets and of much-needed rest,

Back to the earth return'd the day's oblation

Of passionate outpouring ; on her breast

It fell in silent tears, which did renew

Her weary, loving heart with their mild dew.

Silent was all, as the deep hush of night
 Could make it ; and the moonbeam's shimmering
 track

Along the lake, tho' changing in the light
 Like glittering scales on some sea-monster's back,
Had scarcely more of motion than the reeds
Which slept among the margin's water-beads.

Silent was all, while sleep and rest, restoring
 The waste of life, were softly at their work ;—
All but one wakeful bird his song out-pouring,
 And one poor human heart, which toil and irk
And stress of busy life, had vainly press'd ;—
The nightingale, and poet, could not rest.

The bird had sprung from out his leafy lair,
 Where jealous watch he kept upon the rose,
And scattering silence round him, thrill'd the air,
 And made night musical with lyric woes ;
While all unheeding, cold, yet fair to view,
The rose lay slumbering in her veil of dew.

The poet at his casement, gaz'd afar

To where, across the lake, fair Lilian lay ;
She was the magnet of his heart, his star,—

An idol which his fancy wrought in clay.
There in her chamber, careless of his throes,
She slept as dreamless as the slumbering rose.

Poor poet heart ! Wake through the livelong hours,

Mark with thy fever'd beat, the languorous time ;
Weave thy wild thought with rhetoric's fairest
flowers,

And make a "posie" for thy love, of rhyme :
She may not value it, but there are others
Alive upon the earth—sisters and brothers.

So on through many a night these watchers twain

Pour'd out their burning hearts in streams of song.
And who shall say they sung or loved in vain,
Tho' sleeplessly, and wearily, and long,
And fruitlessly they waited for some token
That the dull sleep of the belov'd was broken ?

Nay, erring, blind, misguided, but not vain,
One single throb of love can ever be.
The poet in these nights of sleepless pain
Is sitting on his student's form, where he,
With toil, and eke with tears, must get by heart
The lesson which shall fit him for his part.

He learns to love ; the heart fair Lilian enter'd
Will soon be open as a royal hall,
In which her image still is thron'd and centred,
But where he listens to the claims of all.
So, like a beacon which the torch divine
Of love has kindled, shall his genius shine.

And that poor bird, whose wakeful soul finds vent
In such wild music that his life has been
Fabled as one adoring discontent
Hereditary to his race, I ween
He is the poet of his kind, whose strain
Interprets to each heart its own fond pain.

THE LOVE THAT DARES TO WAIT.



A MAIDEN of a race that heralds glory in, lov'd one
Whose single arm had wrought the deeds that on their
blazon shone ;
Lov'd him as none can love but once, and few can love
at all ;
But these lovers they must part, must part, whatever
may befall.

Now, Mortimer's fair Helen waits the hour when she
must say
Farewell to love, and Walter Graeme, for ever and a
day ;
She sits amongst her people, in a groin'd and vaulted
room,
Where portraits of an endless line, make phantoms in
the gloom.

He comes, he greets her silently, and not so much as
names

Her name to those cold Mortimers beneath the picture
frames,

Who quit them in the measure that befits their
haughty state ;—

And the number'd minutes drop like threads from off
the woof of fate.

The fitting moment now is come, and he with formal
speech

Just moves before the gather'd clan, and bids adieu to
each ;

Then stops awhile anent his love, who rises up with
haste ;—

But not one word of idle breath does either true-love
waste.

A joining of their loyal hands, a meeting of true
eyes,—

A moment's meeting, calm and firm—they parted on
this wise,

And he went forth to do more deeds which, blazon'd on
a shield,
Had won for him the fair true hand he now is forc'd
to yield.

She stands there still when he is gone, she neither
speaks, nor stirs,
She stands there still—a Mortimer amongst the
Mortimers ;—
They know her true, and tender, and they turn their
eyes aside
To let her struggle with her woe, and conquer by her
pride.

She stands there still ; they know her true, and tender,
and they fear
That she will falter now, but no, she does not shed a
tear ;
Defying with a patient scorn the anguish of the
hour,
She stands there still—a Mortimer in passion's guarded
power.

Her father comes,—the stern old lord,—and looks her
in the face,—

That smiling patient face,—quoth he : “Go to, my
friends, give place,

Her we may blight, but never bend,—Soh ! stop him
at the gate ;

What might have we to match a love, that smiling
dares to wait ?”

And so they stopp'd and brought him in,—thrice
noble Walter Graeme,

No hand could show more fair than his from carving
of a name ;

And Mortimer's true Helen he at Candlemas will wed,
In the faces of the Mortimers,—the living and the
dead.

A RHYME FOR THE TIME.



WHAT is to say, had best be said,
So, Lilian, look another way ;
Just droop your eyes or turn your head,—
Let reason have due course to-day.
Well, well, this giddy time just past,
It has been, yes, it has been worth
The life we've spent on it so fast
That we seem beggars now on earth.
But let me argue out our case,—
My case,—since yours is all too plain,
So many press to fill my place
That, faith ! my loss may be your gain.
Nay, do not look or speak just now,—
Man's reason is a thing so fine
That the least touch may overthrow
The strongest chain he can combine ;

And eyes there are, which meeting mine,
Mislead me like a marsh-fire light ;—
Eyes with the glow and hue of wine
Like yours, can daze a man outright.
And deadlier peril when you speak
Awaits my boasted self-control,
For then there comes upon your cheek
An eddy which sucks in my soul !
How is it that I could behold
Your image better made in wax,
And—do not judge me overbold—
Could coldly gaze on it, and tax
The maker that he had not given
Some easy grace which should fulfil
My whole ideal ? while now, oh heaven !
I see you perfect at your will.

But this is scarce the way to come
At any reasonable end ;
Before I take you in the sum
I will resolve you, and so mend

My notion of you by a stern
 Analysis of your pretensions ;
By isolating facts we learn
 To see them in their true dimensions.

A little woman, five feet two ;
 (Nay, love, I mark'd it on the wall,
And what the wall says must be true,
 Tho' truly I had call'd you tall) ;
A maze of tawny hair, with eyes
 That lurk beneath at whites to daunt
With wicked brightness, but for size
 And form, what are they ? Eyes, avaunt !
Of dimples, would they keep but still,
 One soon would weary, and then time
Turns them to wrinkles ; he does ill,
 I count it for his heaviest crime ;
Still they are worse than nought, you see ;
 And for your waist, —band or no bands, —
No waist so slender ought to be,
 It can be crush'd between two hands.
Thus I withstand you when I dole
 You out in parts, but—heart of youth,

Fire, folly, madness, on the whole
Are ye more far from sober truth
Than these and such-like ways men have
To put in doubt the thing they know,
And make their pathway to the grave
Decently dull with hollow show ?

Pardon my earnestness ; I smile,
Now seeing you so slight and small,
To think that it should take a mile
Of silk to cover you withal !
I would it were not so, and I
Might hope to win with honest toil
The vestments which should over-lie
Your beauty as its humble foil.
See, love, I smile again, I think
How in the happy days just pass'd
Your dainty share of meat and drink
Had made a hermit's lenten fast.
I would that I might take you home
And keep you as we keep a bird ;
But there are laws that where you come—
You women—there must come a herd

That we must feast at periods,
That we must dress for, live for, die for ;—
I dare not hope against such odds
To win the modest ends I sigh for.

Now, sweet, I listen. What? You say
You do not care for all this throng?
That you and I might take our way,
Nor think we did our neighbour wrong
If we should only strive to feed,
To house, and clothe our happy selves,
With, now and then, for some great need,
A morsel from our frugal shelves?
You social Titan! would you dare
The world's exactions thus to flout?
But what if silk fail everywhere,
And cotton may not eke it out?
Ah! how is this? I hear you laugh,—
I will not see ;—how say you then,—
That women never yet were half
So eager for their toys as men?
That in your wildest fancy-flights
There is more measure than in ours ;

That you would lie on thorns for nights
About an unpaid bill for flowers ;
That all that marks the maddest she,
Who wanders thriftless out of bounds
In matters of finance, will be
A difference of some few poor pounds,—
Tens to our hundreds. Then you joke
About our love of bygone things :
Old pictures, grim with priceless smoke,
Old wines, their cob-webs and bees-wings ;
Till pressing harder, you declare
That, like the gondolas of Venice,
The dusky garb which now we wear,
Saves us from dangers that would menace
Our sightlier persons through the clashing
Of rival suits ; that in our case
'Tis well, for swords were always flashing
When men wore silks and Flanders lace !
Then, almost breathless, you sum up :
Antiques, plates, clubs, the opera stall,
The horse that is to win the cup,
The *coup* that is to pay for all ;

Cigars and yachting, needy friends,
And building manias ;—he who searches,
You say, will find 'tis man who spends—
Save in the luxury of churches !

No more ? You 've done ? Why, child, so pale ?
Nay, not "with counting up men's crimes ;"
Lilian, throw down this idle veil,
Jesting is bitter work at times.
Do I but dream I can discern
A secret hid with female art ?
Speak, and God's truth ! By heaven, I burn
To strain you with it to my heart.
"No more than this," you say, "the hold
Your feeble woman's will can take
On such things is so slight, so cold,
You could release them for love's sake."

Now let me pause upon that word,
I feel as one before whose eyes
A mist, whereby his life seem'd blurr'd,
Had parted and reveal'd the skies.

Nay, turn not now away, I must,
Yes, must, will, read your face, and know
Whether this wild new hope and trust
Will bear the light ; one moment, so ;
Now veil your eyes, as best you may,
I 've seen the thing I wished to see,
My soul retires within, I pray
That what your love divines in me,
Mine may accomplish ; I shall prize
Myself less meanly, having found
My humble image thron'd in eyes
That frame it with a glory round ;
For there I show, so brave, so strong,
A true man conquering the place
Which shall be ours amid the throng,
The hurtling crowd of fortune's race ;
And there I show as wise and pure
As I shall be when we have trod
That path which some way hence is sure
To land us at the feet of God.
I take it that the only seer
Possess'd of true divining powers,
Is this same love, who, trumpet-clear,
Now speaks in these two hearts of ours.

He tells me you are brave and true,
And fond, yes,—spite your fierce denial !—
And if he say as much to you
Of me—Oh, put me on my trial !
I would not be the fool to shrink
From danger to your outward fate,
While hurling back your love to sink
Your life beneath its costly freight.

I see, I see, that panther gaze,
It could deceive me once, but now
I know your little winsome ways,
They shall not fright me more, I vow.
The hand that would not feel its sting,
'Tis said, should boldly grasp the nettle.
Lie still, you little prickly thing,
You only put me on my mettle.
But, child, I fain would serve alone,
And keep you queen-like at my side ;
I feel your burthen, not my own ;
It presses on my love, and pride.
Still, God be prais'd ! the woman's fate,
Who serves her turn for love, is finer,

More noble than the idle state

To which we blindly would consign her.

And so again, again I seal

Our contract, and thus nerv'd, thus blest,

I'll labour stoutly for your weal,

And trust your Maker for the rest.

NATHANIEL TO RUTH.



I know not how, dear heart, I came to love you as I
do,—

Too much, I fear, for one who feels the value of
his soul ;

And mother's choice, you know, was set on Hannah,
not on you,—

And mother had a calm, wise way of judging, on
the whole.

Tho' Hannah is by some few years my elder, that they
say

Gives promise of a prudent home ; and Hannah
is no doubt

A rare God-fearing woman, one who treads the narrow
way,

And cares not what the heathen world are striving
for without.

You have a great example in your sister, and indeed,
I give you justice, you have tried to profit by
that light,
But then you love, and where you love, you cling like
any weed,—
I fear it is to pleasure me you chiefly do the right.

You've tried to keep in check the wayward nature of
your hair,
Which fain would wanton into curl for other eyes
than mine ;
But, smoothing it away, have laid the blue-vein'd
temples bare,
Whereon some naughty golden rings still break
away and shine.

And so the master's son must stop to tell you as you
pass,
You put it back to show your ear of rosy-tinted
pearl ;
I told him that his weapon was the jaw-bone of
an ass—
Not us'd upon the Philistines, but turn'd against
a girl !

The kerchief that on Hannah's neck sets down without
a fold,

Takes quite another curve on yours, but you are
not to blame

If beauty in its nature has a something almost bold ;—

I would you were more homely, while I lov'd you
still the same !

And now I'm on the subject, Ruth, I'll speak out all
my mind :

Two months ago, when Janet Byrne lay dying on
her bed,

And Hannah (such a gift of prayer as her's where shall
you find ?)

Improv'd on the occasion till the dying child was
dead

Then in the midst,—when Hannah urg'd that each one
should put up

A cry that in this death his soul should hear a
special call,—

I saw you rise and steal towards Jane (not dead yet)
with a cup,
Her feeble cry for water you had heard above
it all.

My spirit was so lifted up with Hannah's fervent
prayer,
I thought you were an angel come to take the
child away ;
You sat there, with your tender eyes and glory of
bright hair,
Which fell upon your shoulders,—as an angel's
haply may.

Jane's head upon your bosom, and her little hands in
yours,
Your living sigh gone forth to meet the infant's
dying breath,—
A trance of bliss came over me,—such blessedness
ensures
The narrow way we walk in,—that I envied her
her death !

But you, my Ruth, what thoughts were yours as low
you laid her head ?

Your eyes were dry, but in your smile a watery
radiance shone ;

I fear that in that moment—by that orphan child's
death-bed—

It was her crown you thought of, all too heedless of
your own.

I would not blame a loving heart nor yet an angel
face,

I only say that one like you 'tis hard to judge
aright ;

The work I take for nature's is too like the work of
grace ;—

The darker ground of Hannah's mind throws up
a clearer light.

Her words so gracious when in prayer, are only
gracious then,

And faith in her is strong enough without a prop
to stand ;

She owns no carnal bonds, and only loves the souls of
men ;—

Such shining lights as Hannah are the saving of
the land !

It is not safe for Christian folk to be too good or fair ;
A spirit like a blood-stain'd sword, just hidden by
a sheath—

A sheath like that you wot of—is less like to be a
snare ;

The thoughts must still be humbled by the
filthiness beneath.

My own awakening, too, I own was never of the best ;
The roots of this vile will of mine were set so
deep in love ;

I lov'd the stars, the creeping things, and God with all
the rest,

And long before I turn'd within, I dar'd to look
above.

So much the more it did behove the sharer of my life
To show a clearer calling. Were it better we
should part ?

No ! there's a feeling here with which to call another
wife

Were breaking of a law—far worse than breaking
of a heart.

Well, well, some needs must walk in light, some
follow in the shade ;

Some hold their course triumphant, others totter to
the goal ;

I humbly sue for guidance, but, dear Ruth, I am
afraid

I could not break your tender heart,—no, not to
save my soul.

S O N G.



EYE, hast thou seen the sun,
That thus thou carryest away
What thou hast look'd upon,
As a dazzling mote or ray ?
“ The sun, or the glittering spangles
Of Natalie's mazy hair,—
The sun, or its golden tangles,
Follow me everywhere.”

Ear, hast thou drunk so deep
Of the gurgling sounds on the shore,
That thou hearest them still in thy sleep,
And their echoes will not give o'er ?
“ The waves that sob on the beech,
Or Natalie's laugh so low,—
The waves, or her rippling speech,
Still haunt me, wherever I go.”

Heart, that hast beat so high,
Where is thy shame, thy pride ?
Why, as if guilty, lie
Trembling at Natalie's side ?
“ I kneel there to bear the sin
Of an eye and an ear too deft ;
Would God she would take me in—
A prisoner—tho' for theft ! ”

S O N G.



Oh, little heart, how close you cling,
How close you cling ! when I am fain
To put you back as some light thing,
I find you in your place again.

Your voice is silent when we meet,
But still, while others talk aloud,
I seem to hear your pulses beat,
And see you only in the crowd.

And shall I scorn you that you were
So little in yourself before,
That love, which found you only fair,
Has made you all that you are more ?

A wiser man ere this had ceas'd
 To yearn for some far distant good,
And sat contented at the feast
 Which thus beneath his doorway stood ;

For God's wide universe were dull
 And vacant for the blind of heart,
While seeing eyes find dew-drops full,
 And earth alive in every part.

What should it matter, sweet, if eyes
 That never saw that tender gleam
In yours, should gaze with dull surprise
 On spells whose depths they could not dream ?

I cannot leave you, little heart,
 I cannot tear you from the breast
Of which your life but seems a part,—
 So lie there evermore and rest.

S O N G.



THE brooding birds are singing, love,
And waking up the morn,
And me they wake from troubled sleep
To weep and pray,—to pray and weep.

A little thrush that tried her wings
A year ago to-day,
Now sits beside her mate, who sings
While you are far away.

A lithe green bough was rocking then
Beneath her trembling feet ;
Now all the old year's leaves are dead,
But three are spread to make her bed.

Oh, wither'd hopes ! Oh, leaves of life !
 Ye none again may find,—
Ye all are trampled in the strife,
 Or blown upon the wind.

How strange, my heart, that singing birds
 Should only know one song :
Of heaven and earth in one green glade,
Within its shade—one youth, one maid !

The birds remind me, singing thus,
 Of one sweet summer dawn
That never should have come for us,
 Or never should have gone.

So loud the copse was ringing, love,
 That day, we could not speak ;
But there is utterance far more sweet
In lips that meet when hearts so beat !

And still the birds are singing, love,—
 Oh, happy birds, give o'er !

I listen like the mourning dove,—
I cannot hear them more.

I wander, like the lonely dove,
To find an empty nest ;
And if your spirit linger there,
Still, love, I dare to find all bare !

They mock me now, those singing birds
That twitter overhead,—
They mock me with the very words
That then were left unsaid.

The air grows heavy with their song,
Too thick with sound to breathe.
I weep, I weep, but cannot pray,—
Oh, birds, ye sing my soul away !

S O N G.

Love came knocking at my door in the flowery month
of May,

'Twas the morning of the year, and the morning of
the day.

He was a winsome boy,

And I a maiden coy,

But I follow'd him, I follow'd ! for he drew me with
the wile

Of his eyes, his words, and whispers, and the glamour
of his smile.

Oh the merry laughing moments, oh the soft, the
shining hours,

When I follow'd as he led me through his gardens
and his bowers !

Love was a thing divine,

I was his, and he was mine ;

So I follow'd him, I follow'd, could have follow'd till
I died,
In the wake of his young glory, and the fulness of
my pride.

Now the merry days are over, with the joy and pride
and show ;
Love has grown to his full stature ; I am weary
as I go.

Sham'd is the golden head,
And the magic smile is fled ;
For the dust and soil of earth
Mock the greatness of Love's birth ;
But I follow, and if weeping I, though weeping,
follow still,
With no magic and no glamour, but a faithful human
will.

Ay, I follow still, I follow, tho' no longer through the
May,
Tho' the lingering dreams of morning with the morn
have past away.

Now Love is no more glad,
Nay, his very smile is sad ;
But he needs me even more
Than I needed him before ;
So I follow, still I follow, and through all the darker
seeming,
Love's true need of me is sweeter than his smile that
kept me dreaming.

Aud when one day hand in hand we before God's gate
shall stand,
And the gate shall open wide that we enter side by side,
We may gaze in glad surprise
Into one another's eyes,
Not to find a winsome boy,
Or a maiden vain and coy ;
But two creatures shining bright
In the pure and keen love-light,
Of the patience and the faith
That have conquer'd more than death.
Then I follow love no longer, but I sink upon thy breast
To abide there hush'd for ever in the joy of utter rest.

OUT OF THE NIGHT OF HIS SORROW.



OUT of the night of his sorrow,
 Why does the poet cry ?
 What poor help would he borrow ?
 Who at that hour goes by ?
 Wherefore the night as a pall
 Rend with that plaintive wail,
 When they who had come at his call
 Are holden within the veil ?

Why, poor passionate heart,
 Seek to awake the sleepers,
 Who scorn, for their drowsy part,
 To be reckon'd their "brother's keepers" ?
 Rather against the wall
 Turn thy face, when the rod
 Cuts thee deepest, and call
 Only in prayer to God.

Ah ! thou lovest thy brother,
And God alone by that token !
Thou wilt acknowledge none other
Sign than the word He has spoken.
And loving, thou feelest around
All through the darkness and night,
Sharp'ning thine ear for a sound,
Straining thine eye for a sight.

The sound may be cry or moan,
Embalm'd in a measure of rhyme,
And borne to thine ear alone,
All down the river of time ;
The sight may arise as a thought,
Quicken'd and growing like seed,
When to its bed has been brought
The soil of a brother's need.

Loving,—these tokens, as such,
Thrill thee with pleasure most high ;
Thy lips are aglow with the touch
Of the spirits of ages gone by ;

And loving, thou carriest on
 The cry, and the hope, and the kiss,
 Which shall bind all the wide world in one
 Link'd chain, of love, sorrow, and bliss.

Lift up thy voice then, poet,
 Cry, cry aloud in the night ;
 Few will awaken to know it—
 Fewer have heard thee aright.
 Yet will thy plaint not return
 Echoless back to thine ear ;
 Hearts at thy sorrow will burn,
 When it is heard not too near ;

Glad that there stir in the air
 Sounds which to music can change
 The note of their dull despair,
 Rising all lonely, and strange.
 Lift up thy voice then, poet,
 Let it be heard still above ;
 Take of thy sorrow and sow it
 Broadcast, in faith, as in love.

LONGING AND ASKING.



MOTHER, when we meet upon that shore,

Where I too may hope to be at rest,
Shall mine eyes behold thee evermore,

As my heart must ever love thee best ?
Wilt thou claim me as I stand amaz'd

While the veil still clogs my spirit-feet—
Claim me with the mother-love that gaz'd

From thy mortal eyes with such mild heat ?
Shall I owe thee sweet obedience then ?

Shall I pay thee back each foregone due ?
Shall I grow a child beneath thy ken ?

Or appear such haply in thy view ?

There are bonds which we call bonds of flesh,
That do enter deep into the soul ;
Or surround it closely, as a mesh
That must leave its impress on the whole.
So our human loves, which at their birth
Lowliest human faculties enfold,
Grow beyond the limits of this earth,
In the spirits they have help'd to mould.
Spirit that has deeply sounded spirit
Here, must meet hereafter, we should know ;
But I would our future might inherit
All that keeps our present life a-glow :
Not the substance only, but the form
Of the dear affections that now bind us,
That our bright eternal home be warm
As the mouldering hearths we leave behind us.

So I pray that when upon that shore
I may land and enter into rest,
I shall see thee, mother, evermore,
As my heart must ever love thee best.
All thy being, bore it not the sign
Shadow'd in the woman's name—Eve, Life ?

Life that she in sharing dares resign,—

Mortal weakness conquering in the strife.

Mother, shall thy children dare to doubt

That the end of perfect womanhood

Endlessly shall compass thee about,

In the reign of all things true and good?

When we stood on that white winter day,

And the sunlight, filtering through the snow,

Lighted on that white and frozen clay,

With the crown of peace upon its brow ;

Who had deem'd the woman pale and worn,

Gazing as they will who look their last,

Could have been a child left there to mourn,

One who seem'd so early to have past.

Finelymoulded, with the hair's dark sweep,

Straightly parted from the fair, still face ;

Calm and grand as some diviner sleep

Held the wearied one in close embrace ;

Smooth and firm, and all untouch'd with care,

Men had deem'd that little children's cries

Should bewail thee, not the long despair

Looking from a full-grown woman's eyes.

Yet I think not that to outward ken,
In thy day of youth thou could'st have been
All complete as that I look'd on then—
Awful, tender, beautiful, serene !
Fades the blossom here before the fruit
Forms upon the bough ; our wither'd leaves—
Strength and beauty—go to feed our root ;
In the dusk we gather in our sheaves.
Souls that into fuller beauty break,
Ripen on the body's slow decay ;
Thus in perfect likeness none can wake,
But to look upon the perfect day.

But as such may we on high behold
Thee, the mother of our thoughts, hopes, lives ;
Not as one whose clinging arms should fold
Infant forms, but when as women, wives,
Happy in ourselves and in one other,
From thyself thou badest us go free ;
Then in angels' eyes thou wert a MOTHER,
In the highest, last, supreme degree !

Oh, how short a time he thus possess'd thee—

He, the widow'd ! Growing great beneath
All the sore temptations that oppress'd thee,

With the last thy spirit broke its sheath.

Gone the little one as went the rest,

Scatter'd wide, and wider over space ;

Could the heart within the mother's breast

Keep on beating still in one fix'd place ?

All day long she hears her children's voices,—

Day or night they will not let her sleep ;

Far away with this one she rejoices,—

Farther still with that one she must weep.

Surely it were better she should go,

Than live on with such divided life ;

Ah, we too much wrong'd thee with our woe,

Standing by, sweet mother, and true wife,

When the struggle which so rent thy frame,

God, in pity, made at last to cease ;

And the angel of his mercy came

With the order for thy soul's release !

Thus I wander on,—my thoughts are drawn

Blindly by the current which will set

Ever to that past which is not gone—

But alive with hope, not vain regret.

Here I pause, still praying as before,

That when I shall enter into rest,

I may see thee, mother, evermore,

At thy noblest, fullest, latest, best.

LOVE UNREQUITED.



LORD, I am old ; the life that was so sweet
 Will soon be breath'd out darkly at Thy feet.
 No more for me the sudden joys, or tears,
 The keen pursuits, and longings of young years.
 Life's gloaming is about me, calm, and still,
 Here in the deepening shadow of the hill.

Lord, I am old ; I see no form, or face,
 Of any that began with me life's race.
 I step from out the serried ranks of time,
 To see the runners in their eager prime
 Rush past me, and I greet them with a cheer ;
 In vain,—they are too far away to hear.

The youths and maidens—all their life in flower—
Sit by the ingle where I coldly cower ;
I, inly blessing them as thus they sit,
Love the fresh souls that are so fondly knit ;
But from their eyes, if they should meet with mine,
No answering light is ever seen to shine.

I love to catch the children in their flight,
And take a toll of kisses, in despite
Their laughing struggles. Upward glancing eyes,
And saucy lips, and breathless, curt replies,—
I love them all ; but in what cold degree,
These laughing loves, can they in turn love me ?

Lord, I am old ; and, wearing to life's goal,
Clos'd are the issues of my captive soul.
Dim eyes, dull ears, faint touch, and failing speech,—
A memory which too far out-spans the reach
Of any left to listen,—still and lone
I sit as in a monument of stone.

I hear my household name, and looking round,
I see another answer to the sound.

No wealth have I wherewith I may requite
The charities which make my burthen light ;—
What hand still loves to linger clasp'd in mine ?
What eye my thoughts unspoken would divine ?

Lord, I am old ; but, soul of love and ruth,
In Thee I find again my vanished youth ;
For Thee I am a child,—more dear, may-be,
Than when I lisp'd beside my mother's knee.
To others worn and wasted, bent, and old,—
To Thee a lamb returning to the fold,

Oh, heart so young ! Oh, soul so clear and deep !
Sleep for the weary flesh,—for thee no sleep.
God's child—I keep my courses in His school,
Learn to life's end, and feel how high his rule.
Lord, let my coward heart no more complain :
Like Thee, I love, and am not lov'd again !

"He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit."—JOHN, xiii, 10.

HE that is wash'd needs but to wash his feet,
 And he is wholly clean. What words are these ?
 So hard, so dark, they warn us from the beat
 Of outward sense, and bid us rise to seize
 Some ray of light flash'd downwards from the sun
 Of truth, eternal as the truthful One.

He that is wash'd needs but to wash his feet ;
 His comings and his goings must be clean,
 His path still pure adown life's crowded street,
 His track upon its mire and slime unseen.
 Few are too weak or vile to purge their walk ;
 Our Master did not mock us in His talk.

He bade us do the thing we *could*—no more ;
 Be heedful of our outward ways and deeds.
 Watch well our feet—that so He might outpour
 His spirit for our spirits' inward needs :
 Till we in sabbath rest and peace should sit,
 And hear His words, "Clean are ye every whit."

"And the evening and the morning were the first day."—GENESIS, i, 5.

We awake up in the twilight of the dawn ; yes,
 The soul looks on the twilight from its sleep,
 And we slowly, as the vapours are withdrawn, guess
 The wonders of the land and of the deep.
 And the morning and the evening are the first day—
 The morning when we run, and when we leap ;
 And the evening, when our times are at their worst, ay,
 'Tis a view of human life to make us weep.

When the lower life rejoices in its noon, when
 The pulses keep glad motion in our clay,
 May the midnight of the spirit have its moon then,
 And stars to light it safely on its way !
 When the beauty of our earthly day is gone, where
 The mortal frame is sinking to decay,
 May the spirit light the body with its dawn, ere
 It brighten all our being with its day.

For the spirit to the twilight of the *eve* wakes,—
The twilight and the perils of the night,—
And is nurtur'd in the darkness till it leave takes,
To rise up in its glory to the light.
So the evening and the morning are the first day—
The evening that but ushers in the fight ;
And the morning when the bonds of flesh are burst, ay,
We feel that we are reading it aright.

PEACE to the odalisque, the facile slave,
Whose uninvidious love rewards the brave,
Or cherishes the coward ; she who yields
Her lord the fief of waste, uncultur'd fields
To perish in non-using ; she whose hour
Is measur'd by her beauties' transient flower ;
Who lives in him, as he in God, and dies
The death of parasites, no more to rise.
Graceful ephemera ! Fair morning dream
Of the young world ! In vain would women's
 hearts
In love with sacrifice, withstand the stream
Of human progress ; other spheres, new parts
Await them. God be with them in their quest —
Our brave, sad working-women of the west !

PEACE to the odalisque, whose morning glory
Is vanishing, to live alone in story.
Firm in her place, a dull-rob'd figure stands,
With wistful eyes, and earnest, grappling hands :
The working-woman, she whose soul and brain—
Her tardy right—is bought with honest pain.
Oh woman ! sacrifice may still be thine—
More fruitful than the souls ye did resign
To sated masters ; from your lives, so real,
Shall shape itself a pure and high ideal,
That ye shall seek with sad, wide-open eyes,
Till, finding nowhere, baffled love shall rise
To higher planes, where passion may look pale,
But charity's white light shall never fail.

OH Love, on thee a burden has been laid,
 Now in this latter day of doubt and dread !
 Be pure, that thou be strong, and unafraid
 To meet the hosts wherewith thou art bested.
 Thou only champion of the soul blasphem'd
 By arrogant young science ! Show thine eyes
 Immortal, and thy pledges unredeem'd,—
 Then challenge them to shut thee from the skies !
 Oh Love, with thee we fall, with thee we rise,
 Be pure that thou be strong in death's despite ;
 Then creeds may wax or wane 'mid tears and sighs,
 But never shall the world be lost in night.
 Thine is the one evangel, through all forms
 Of change surviving, riding out all storms.

Love, show thine eyes, thy stature infinite ;
Those eyes immortal that smile down the uses
Our fleeting lives appoint thee, as a star
That sends a faint and flickering ray from far,
Might seem to smile at men who held its light
A lamp misplaced, and wasting in the night.
O Love ! how much of all thy light conduces
To any service of our lives below ?
Why should thy overplus surcharge the sluices
Of tears, to water weeds of barren woe ?
Why should thy towering stature put to shame
The poor conditions of our lot, or blame
The low, if not through thee we hope to climb
Beyond the blanks of space, the steps of time ?

LOVE, show thine eyes, thy stature infinite ;
 Thou child of dust ! *Thou* slave of breathing clay !
 Remorseless mocker then, why blast with light
 The dwarfs of time—the failures of a day ?
 Why lead them to the rifts within the veil
 Where life with life communes, and where a kiss
 Can open vistas of eternal bliss ?
 Is it to make the sharpen'd senses quail
 Before that reeling blank, that sheer abyss
 Of nothingness that waits us ? Vindicate
 Thy Godhead, and our trust in thee,—our fate
 Is link'd with thine, O Love, as bent and pale
 Thou stand'st arraign'd, and in man's latest plan
 Art shown the true arch-enemy of man.

Nay, Love so lives in sacrifice, he could
 Be taught perchance to loose his highest hope,—
 His hold on life,—and dying, hail the good,
 The end to which the coming ages grope.
 But Love, sad Love, that should his all forego,
 What vision of the future were to show
 His yearning eyes? If, looking through the years,
 He saw the generations halting past,
 More sad than ours, ay, if with rarer tears,
 And struggling onward with no eye upcast,—
 Still onward, onward, upward nevermore—
 Then Love, lost Love, would turn him from the shore
 To wait impatient till the end were won,
 And the weird world were wreck'd upon the sun!

THE END.

T. RICHARDS, GREAT QUEEN STREET, W C.

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